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ARMY FORMATION  
AND DISPOSITION  
DETAILED STUDY

Major Frederick W. Lee, Major General

Major General

VOLUME I

ARMY FORMATION

ARMY FORMATION

ARMY FORMATION





CABINET FORMATION  
AND BICULTURAL RELATIONS:  
SEVEN CASE STUDIES

Report Presented to the Royal Commission  
on Bilingualism and Biculturalism.

Edited by:  
Frederick W. Gibson  
May, 1966





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## I N T R O D U C T I O N

The purpose of this study is to discover what opportunities French Canadians have had for participation in national decisions at the highest level of politics, and to find out whether, and, if so, to what extent, there has been a genuine bicultural partnership in the leadership of the two political parties from which the successive governments of Canada have been formed.

Since decisions on national policy are normally taken by the federal cabinet, the composition and membership of the cabinet determine, in large degree, the opportunity for participation in such decisions. The process and the results of cabinet formation are, therefore, of crucial importance to any section of the Canadian community which is anxious to exercise a strong and continuous influence over national policy.

It was decided, in consultation with Professor Michael Oliver, the Director of Research for the Royal Commission, and Professor John Meisel, the Supervisor of Behavioural Studies for the Commission, that several episodes of cabinet formation should be analyzed by scholars known to have



special knowledge of one or more of them, and that a series of questions should be directed to each episode so as to produce information which would be germane to the Commissioners' field of inquiry.

The following list of cabinets and scholars was then decided upon:

The Macdonald Cabinet of 1867: W.L. Morton  
The Macdonald Cabinet of 1878: Donald G. Creighton  
The Laurier Cabinet of 1896: John T. Saywell  
The Borden Cabinet of 1911: Roger Graham  
The King Cabinet of 1921: Frederick W. Gibson  
The King Cabinet of 1935: H. Blair Neatby  
The St. Laurent Cabinet of 1948: Dale C. Thomson  
The Diefenbaker Cabinet of 1957-8: John Meisel

This list of cabinets offered three advantages over any alternative list of comparable dimensions:

1. it is distributed, at intervals of from nine to eighteen years, over eighty years of the life of the Dominion;
2. it provides extensive and equal representation to the practices of the Conservative and the Liberal party;
3. a good deal evidence is available about each of these cabinets, and studies of the kind outlined above would not require substantial amounts of fresh research, with the delay which that would necessarily involve.

Each of the scholars whose names appear above agreed to write a paper on one cabinet, and the editor undertook, in addition, to write a concluding chapter summarizing the findings of the individual papers. Subsequently, two of the contributors, Professor Meisel and Professor Neatby, were





obliged to withdraw because of then other and heavy commitments to the Royal Commission. Since it appeared unlikely that anyone else could be found to do the study of the Diefenbaker cabinet without prolonged delay, this study was reluctantly abandoned. The editor decided, however, in an unexpected burst of optimism, that his knowledge of the 1935 cabinet formation was sufficient, or could quickly be made sufficient, for the purpose, and that a serious gap in the sequence of the papers might thereby be avoided. In acting upon this decision, I have had the benefit of several discussions with Professor Neatby and of a memorandum which he prepared on Ernest Lapointe's position in the 1935 cabinet formation, all of which are acknowledged with gratitude but without committing Professor Neatby to responsibility for anything that is said in this study. The papers on the cabinet formations of 1921 and 1935, and the concluding chapter are the sole responsibility of the editor.

The questions which each of the contributors to this study were invited to answer are as follows:

- (1) If the Prime Minister was an English Canadian, did he treat the French-Canadian leaders of his party solely or mainly as the representatives of a province which, like the other provinces, was entitled to representation in the cabinet? Or did he single out a French-Canadian colleague and give him a position





of special influence in the process of cabinet-making, perhaps treating him for this purpose as his principal lieutenant or even as co-Prime Minister? If a French Canadian was singled out in this way, was he given the final say on Quebec representation in the cabinet? Was he given, in addition, a veto power or other special influence on the choice of representatives from other provinces? Did he seek or was he given a particular portfolio so as to recognize his special position in the cabinet? If the Prime Minister was a French Canadian, did he treat his English-Canadian colleagues solely or mainly as representatives of their provinces or did he single out an English-Canadian colleague and treat him, for purposes of cabinet-making in the special manner described above?

- (2) If the Prime Minister was an English Canadian, did he consult French Canadian leaders of his party about the representation of Quebec in the cabinet? Did he consult them about English-speaking as well as French-speaking representation of Quebec in the cabinet? Did he consult them about possible representation of French Canadians from provinces other than Quebec? Did he consult them about wider problems of cabinet formation, including the representation of other provinces or groups and the assignment of portfolios among the cabinet as a whole? If he consulted French-Canadian colleagues on the questions, did he take their advice? Did he receive conflicting advice from them on these matters? To put these questions in a slightly different form, did French-Canadian leaders endeavour to influence the choice of ministers or the assignment of portfolios for provinces or groups outside Quebec, or did they concentrate their attention on problems of Quebec representation in the cabinet? If the Prime Minister was a French Canadian, did he consult English-Canadian colleagues simply about the representation of their respective provinces in the cabinet, or did he also consult them about wider aspects of cabinet formation, including the representation of Quebec and the assignment of portfolios among the cabinet as a whole? Did English-Canadian leaders attempt to influence a French-Canadian Prime Minister's choice of ministers from Quebec or did they concentrate their attention on the representation of provinces other than Quebec?



- (3) What portfolios did French-Canadian leaders seek for French-Canadian representatives in the cabinet? Did they get these portfolios? Did they get the most important portfolios, judging importance by (a) the relevance of a particular portfolio to the distinctive ethnic and cultural interests of French Canadians and (b) by the respect and prestige which the possession of a particular portfolio commanded among French Canadians generally and (c) by the leverage which a particular portfolio could exert on the administration of the central policies of the government? Was there any understanding among the national party leadership that certain portfolios should be given or should not be given to French Canadians, and, if so, what was the basis of such an understanding? Was there any understanding among the national party leadership that certain portfolios should be given or should not be given to English Canadians, and, if so, what was the basis of such an understanding?
- (4) Did French-Canadian leaders endeavour to extract commitments from the Prime Minister, or to reach an understanding with him, on issues of policy and legislation during the period of cabinet formation? If so, on what issues and with what success? Did English-Canadian leaders endeavour to extract commitments from the Prime Minister, or to reach an understanding with him, on issues of policy and legislation during the period of cabinet formation? If so, on what issues and with what success?
- (5) Did any French-Canadian leader propose that the cabinet be composed of equal numbers of English Canadians and French Canadians? Did French-Canadian leaders press for an increase of French-Canadian representation in the cabinet above the number in the previous administration? Did French-Canadian leaders ask that any specific proportion of cabinet members be drawn from Quebec or from French Canada as a whole? Did French Canadian leaders endeavour to enlarge or to reduce the representation of the English-speaking minority of Quebec in the cabinet? Did English-Canadian leaders endeavour to enlarge or to reduce the number of French-Canadian representatives in the cabinet?





- (6) With respect to those French Canadians who were taken into the cabinet, were the choices influenced by a belief that they would be more co-operative, on matters of policy, with the English-Canadian members of the cabinet than would other French-Canadian leaders who were left out? Turning the question around, were some French-Canadian leaders excluded from the cabinet because they were believed to be too inflexible on important policies or because they were opposed by other and more powerful French-Canadian leaders, or for other reasons? Did similar considerations apply with equal force to the inclusion or exclusion of English-Canadian leaders?

Finally, I would like to record my sincere gratitude to my colleagues, the contributing authors of this study, both for the substance of their contributions and for the promptness with which they submitted them.

My grateful thanks are also due to the literary executors of the Mackenzie King Estate for allowing me to reproduce, for the purposes of this report to the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism, the passages from the Mackenzie King Diaries which are contained herein.

Frederick W. Gibson





## CHAPTER 1

### The Cabinet of 1867

By W. L. Morton

#### I The General Circumstances

It is first necessary, in considering the methods by which the first federal cabinet of Canada was formed, and the character it was given by the methods and circumstance of its formation, to note the extent to which, because it was the first federal cabinet, the circumstances of its formation were exceptional and in some respects unique.

The first circumstance to be noted is the fact of Confederation itself. The union of the four original provinces in Confederation was a novelty in British American politics. There had been nothing like it before. Not even the union of the Canadas in 1840 was a precedent. Then two colonies had been made one. The new colony except in territorial size and population and some new constitutional elements, such as the rule restricting the introduction of money bills to a minister of the Crown, was the same in power; and in its relation to the imperial government was the same in status, as had been its two constituent elements, Lower and Upper Canada. Nor did the development of responsible government affect its formal status. All the British American colonies came to have greater internal autonomy, and even greater external freedom, as the negotiation of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 revealed. But they remained formal and actual provinces of the British Empire, with no international personality, and no final voice in their own constitutional development.



(One, and a most important qualification is necessary. The union of the Canadas and responsible government, working in a province which, though united, had two bodies of civil law and two languages, produced a novel kind of cabinet: - the cabinet representative of section and of language. A similar sectional representation was embodied in the Legislative Council by the Act of 1856. Both were to be among the more important Canadian precedents for the formation and working of the new federal government.)

The next circumstance to be noted is that Confederation, by implication and general agreement, created a new order of relationships. The federal government replaced the imperial as the co-ordinator and director of the external concerns of the four colonies. They had now to deal with Ottawa, and no longer directly with London. The federal government, it is true, assumed the same relationship with the imperial government that the four colonies had once held. The provincial governments, at the same time, continued to enjoy all the internal autonomy the colonies had once possessed, together with the power to amend their own constitution, except with respect to the office of the lieutenant-governor. At the same time, they enjoyed at Ottawa advantages they had never possessed at London, representation in the House of Commons and the Senate, and, by British American convention, although not by law, in the federal cabinet as well. Confederation was, therefore, an assumption by the new federal government of the former imperial role towards the colonies, and an undertaking to discharge that commission by the established British American institution of representative and responsible





government. It was to be a general government in which there should be local representation and in which the power of the general executive, the cabinet, should be responsible to local influence as well as for the whole of the union. The local responsibility might have rested wholly with the legislature, as in the original American system before the emergence of the nationally representative president. But constitutional monarchy and the cabinet system made it necessary that the cabinet as well as the legislature should be representative if it were also to be responsible in the Canadian sense of responsible to the people as well as to parliament. Thus Confederation involved the novel necessity of creating a cabinet which should be not only competent but also representative. In this the new government had, and used, the precedents of Canadian conventions governing the formation of the cabinet.

Third, it is to be noted that the first federal cabinet was not a party cabinet, even to the degree that such a term may be used of cabinets in the middle third of the nineteenth century when party ties were loose and party organization slight. Confederation, broadly speaking, had been planned, and had been carried in the three pre-1867 provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Canada, by coalitions. (The statement is not true - if Canada is considered as two sections, or provinces. There was not coalition in Quebec. The Rouges as a party, and almost all individual Rouges, opposed the Bleus and Confederation.) The cabinet had, therefore, to be drawn from members of the three coalitions, and thus yet another complication was



introduced into the always complex difficulties of choosing the members of a cabinet.

That complication meant that since both Liberals and Conservatives had supported Confederation in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, there had to be both in the cabinet from each province. From Quebec these need be only Bleus, but from Ontario there had not only to be both Liberals and Conservatives, but also Liberals and Conservatives in some rough approximation to the political weight of each party in the province.

The necessity to form a coalition - really, a Confederation, - government, therefore made the formation of the first federal cabinet unusual. It complicated the delicate task of choosing members, although it also gave a greater range of choice and increased the possibility of obtaining a higher degree of talent. Had the Rouge leaders, A. A. Dorion, for example, been available from Quebec in place, say, of Jean-Charles Chapais, the cabinet and its Quebec representation would have been much stronger.

Finally, the circumstances of cabinet formation in 1867 were highly unusual, not to say unique, in that as well as a cabinet, a Senate, two Speakers, two new provincial governments, and, by reversion at least, four new lieutenant-governors, as well as other officers, were to be appointed. The cabinet-makers, therefore, had an unusually wide range of alternative appointments to make. In addition, there were honours, a quite exceptional element in Canadian politics, to be distributed, although these were not at the disposal of Canadian politicians and in fact proved to be only embarrassing.





## II The Conventions of Cabinet-Making in Canada

Such were the novel and unusual circumstances which attended the formation of the federal cabinet of 1867. That formation went forward under conventions and practices well understood among all concerned, Maritimers as well as Canadians, French as well as British. It may be well to take note of these, in order further to clarify the conditions of the formation of the cabinet in 1867.

Before proceeding to discuss the actual formation of the cabinet of 1867, it will be useful to take some brief note of the conventions and practices which had come into being in Canada and the Maritime provinces in the appointment of members to the cabinet and the functioning of the cabinets since the initiation of responsible government in 1848.

The model and exemplar for the colonial cabinets was, of course, the imperial cabinet itself. It is probable, however, that the differences between the society and government of the United Kingdom and those of the colonies were so considerable as to make local usage of more importance than the as yet little known or publicly discussed conventions of cabinet government in England - Walter Bagehot's The English Constitution, was not to appear until 1867. None of the British American politicians had personal experience of British government. The principal, almost the sole, organ of transmission of practical knowledge was the colonial governor, and almost none of them had personal experience of cabinet government. The dispatches and decisions of the Colonial Secretary of the day were the final authority, of course, but required interpretation and application.





Local experience and local needs were in consequence of great importance in determining how cabinet government would develop in practice.

While the subject of cabinet government in Canada awaits direct and detailed study, the following characteristics may be suggested as being relevant to the subject of this submission.

First, the role of all government, and therefore of the executive, was severely limited by convention and practice in the nineteenth century in the United Kingdom, the United States, and in the British North American colonies, especially before 1867. It was, therefore, both acceptable policy and quite practicable to keep government in all its activities, and the cabinet in number of members, quite small. This disposition explains why the leading politicians of Confederation so readily agreed that the cabinet of the Dominion should number no more than thirteen, and refused to solve the problem of appointing a satisfactorily representative cabinet by the simple expedient of adding one or two members to the thirteen agreed upon. It was unanimously and steadfastly held that a larger cabinet would be "unworkable." Surprising as this view is to-day, it was a datum from which the work of forming the cabinet of 1867 proceeded.<sup>1</sup>

1. Boyd, John, Sir George Etienne Cartier, Bart. (Toronto, 1914) p. 282  
Skelton, Isabel, The Life of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, (Gardenvale, Quebec; 1925) p. 529  
Pope, Sir Joseph, Memoirs of the Right Honourable Sir John Alexander Macdonald (Toronto, 1930) p. 349-50.



From the same concept of limited government a second characteristic of British American cabinet government in the year before 1867 derived. As there was little government, the several departments of government had little work to do. The permanent staffs were small, and the responsible minister had little administrative work. The major posts, the legal departments, finance, public works and, in Canada during these years, defence, were full-time jobs, but even in them as well as in the minor posts, the minister had plenty of time to devote himself to the strictly political demands of patronage and electioneering. The extraordinary amount of private political correspondence in the Macdonald Papers bears out this general statement, as does any acquaintance with the lives of the other leading politicians. The minister at that date was primarily the politician, and only to a minor degree an administrator.

The work of the cabinets, then, had relatively little to do with administering extensive departments of government, or with formulating and advancing great programs of innovation and reform, much as their work exceeded that of earlier governments. Their efforts were much more devoted to holding together a majority in legislatures in which party discipline, or even party membership, was relatively little developed, and to attending to the pressures for patronage which necessarily accompanied such efforts to maintain a stable majority. To accomplish this work a cabinet had need of members each of whom had influence in some important section of the province and in some important body of interest or opinion. Hence, the cabinet was not only free to be political. It was of necessity highly political,





and to be political successfully, it had to be representative.

Any cabinet in a country with a free electorate was, of course, subject to this need, even that of the United Kingdom. In British North America the need was increased by the size of the country, the dispersion of population, and the marked degree of local feeling in all the provinces. The importance of these factors for the development of Canada's government merits attention, but has never received the study it deserves.

The representative character of British North American cabinets was subtly accentuated by various colonial peculiarities. One was the importance of the official salary to a minister who was normally unable to live of his own resources, but was dependent on his salary. This dependence made his post a job and the salary a piece of patronage. He was thus one with the politicians and electors who sought patronage as a natural currency of public life. A beneficiary of patronage himself, he was well disposed towards being a dispenser of patronage. Indeed, the power to distribute patronage was what in the main gave his office meaning and substance.

The same thing was true also if he were not a public man who had made politics a career, as John A. Macdonald had, but was one who used cabinet office as a step to a permanent appointment in the public service, a lawyer like Robert Spence in Canada West in 1858, or as Thomas D'Arcy McGee planned to do after 1867, because McGee had no profession and desperately needed an assured income. Such men had an affinity for those who sought one or the other of the many rewards of politics.



In fact, the nature of political life and cabinet government in this period is misunderstood if it is not realized that the principal role of political life was not the administration of existing law and the making of new laws, but the rewarding of those who took part in public life by the distribution of political patronage. This, of course, has always been true of political life, and is necessarily true. Those who do the drudgery and run the hazards of political life must be rewarded, or the necessary work will not be done, or the necessary hazards incurred. The coming of responsible government and the extension of democracy was essentially a widening of the circle of those among whom it was necessary to the winning and exercise of political power to distribute patronage.

Explicitly relevant to the subject of this paper is, however, not the above general truth, but the particular event which was the introduction of responsible, or cabinet, government within the British North colonies. Before 1848 the distribution of patronage was divided between the governor and the assembly, after that date the distribution of patronage was concentrated in the cabinet. The concentration was produced by two things. One was the surrender of more and more subjects of domestic colonial concern to departments of government headed by responsible ministers. The other was the introduction of control of the budget by the department of finance, begun in Canada by the Act of Union and extended to the other colonies by 1860. Thus the control of patronage became a cabinet matter, and not one for the governor or for members of the legislature, except as



they might be able to influence ministers of the Crown. Hence, to distribute patronage both widely and effectively, the members of the cabinet had to be representative of sections and interests, and their power and influence was increased by their position as representative dispensers of patronage.

The efficacy of this role was increased by the nature of the patronage to be distributed. While there were some major prizes, they were largely judicial, or in the civil service, and were, or tended to be, for life. They were for that reason seldom available. The much greater part of patronage, however, was made of small items, petty jobs and expenditures, which could be, as befitted a democracy with a wide male franchise, widely diffused. The fact that patronage was also frankly partisan and often personal, except for the senior judicial posts, limited the degree of diffusion, but also operated to vary the political, sectarian and personal interests in receipt of patronage. The role of the cabinet member as distributor of so widely spread a patronage was much increased in efficiency by his being the representative political chief, or boss, of a region, or a special interest.

The local member was not, of course, excluded from the power to bestow patronage. His place in the process, however, was not that of final decider of who should get what, but that of one with a right and the means of access to the minister. His influence in his riding was much affected by his success in obtaining from the departments what his constituents sought. It was on this relationship of minister with member that party





government came to rest, although even a political opponent had to be listened to normally when he came as the representative of his constituency, and the award of what might be called "staple" patronage, expenditures on roads and bridges, and aid for widows, etc. did not depend wholly on party loyalty or political support in the legislature. Even in cabinet government something of the general character of government remained, and even a minister of a party cabinet could be non-partisan and humane in minor grants of the public patronage. Even this, of course, contributed to his character as a popular representative member of a cabinet formed to serve as well as govern the various sections and interests of the country.

The British North American cabinet was, therefore, a representative body in itself, even in a unitary state such as each province was. It was, of course, also a body of confidential sworn advisers united to advise the formal head of the government, and to administer the government of the province as a united body of counsellors and administrators. The convention of British cabinet government, that the cabinet was a body of political talent and administrative skill which maintained a real as well as a formal solidarity among its members, was accepted fully and without question. But it was a solidarity of sectional and communal representatives, not of the merely ablest politicians a party could produce.



### III The Preliminary Decisions on Cabinet Formation, 1867

It was with such experience of cabinet government in the circumstances of British American experience that the leading Fathers of Confederation approached the task of forming the first federal cabinet of the new federation. One major, and for the Province of Canada, novel departure was made at the outset, although by the governor-general, Lord Monck, and not by a Canadian politician. That was to establish the convention for the new federation that the office of first minister should be held by one person and not by two, as had been the practice in Canada. Monck's principle was accepted by all the Canadians without demur, as was his choice of John A. Macdonald to be the first Prime Minister of Canada.<sup>2</sup> The new cabinet, then, would have a single, pre-eminent head, although not a new department of public business.

This decision had two results. One was to make it possible to add one to the number of the cabinet members, at once without too sharply emphasizing the number of members of a province from which the Prime Minister was drawn, in this instance Ontario, and at the same time to increase the weight both of the Ontario representation in the cabinet and that of the Conservative

2. Sir Joseph Pope, Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald (Toronto, 1921) pp. 45-46; letter from Governor-General Viscount Monck to Macdonald, dated May 24, 1867.  
Donald Creighton, Road to Confederation, (Toronto, 1964) p. 432





representation among the Ontario members.

The second was not discussed, but in fact underlines one of the decisive aspects of Confederation. In 1815 French Canadians were the majority of the population of all British North America. In 1840 they were still a majority of the population of the Province of Canada. In 1851 they had ceased to be so, and in 1861 had decisively become a minority.<sup>3</sup> The political duality of the government of the Province had been sectional as well as racial, but as the French were a majority in Canada East (Quebec) their racial position was well defended by the convention of duality. A French Canadian politician had always been one head of the two-headed ministries from 1848 to 1864. Cartier's acceptance of Confederation had been the acceptance of a minority position for French Canadians in the federation. (There was, of course, compensation in the acquisition of a majority position in the Province of Quebec.) That minority position was now symbolized both by the principle of representation by population in the House of Commons and the creation of the personal Prime Ministership. In consequence, the likelihood of French Canada holding the weight of political office in Canada (or of being one partner in a dual state) was greatly diminished.

The decision, and its consequences, were accepted by Cartier, presumably as part of the acceptance of Confederation, and no objection by any French Canadian at the time is known to the writer.

3. For the exact figures see Canada and Its Provinces, III, 204; IV, 587; and IX, 102. Also see Census of Canada, 1870-71, V, 10, 12; General Census of Canada, 1931, Vol. I.



Objection to the treatment of Cartier and French Canadians was to come, not in the matter of this or other political arrangements, but in the matter of honours. It may be questioned whether the squabble caused by the way in which honours were granted is relevant to the subject of this study. But it is noted because it may reveal that while Cartier accepted the political arrangements as a matter of political necessity and good sense, he by no means accepted any subordination of French to English Canadians except in point of numbers.

The trouble arose because Lord Monck, apparently on his own and sole initiative, and in order both to honour Macdonald's leading role at the Westminster Conference, and to emphasize the pre-eminence of the Prime Minister, recommended that Macdonald be made a Knight Commander of the Bath, with, of course, the title Sir, while Cartier, Galt, Tilley, Tupper, Howland and McDougall were recommended to be Companions of the Bath. Cartier peremptorily declined the honour, on the ground that for him to accept it would be to condone a slight on his race. He also asserted that personally he stood as high in Canadian politics as Macdonald and had done as much for Confederation. Galt felt obliged to decline the honour granted<sup>4</sup> him along with Cartier. Lord Monck was then in a very awkward situation. After a year's correspondence, the two were allowed to resign, Cartier was made a baronet, Galt a

4. O. D. Skelton, Life and Times of Sir A. T. Galt (Toronto, 1920) (see letter to his wife upon refusing C. B.) p. 420.



K.C.M.G., and Langevin a C. B.<sup>5</sup> The French demand for equal honours, if not equal political position, was recognized. The episode reveals that the apparent ease with which political arrangements were made with the French Canadian members does not demonstrate that there was not, or need not have been, any difficulty.

The trouble over honours, however significant it may have been of underlying feeling, seems not to have affected the process of appointing the cabinet. The delegates to the Westminster Conference, or at least the leaders, agreed among themselves before leaving England in May<sup>6</sup> as to the number of the new cabinet, both its total number and the number from each of the federating provinces.<sup>7</sup> The total number was to be thirteen. This was the maximum number of a "Canadian" cabinet of the former province, now to be divided, twelve, to which was now added the Prime Minister. It was a decision apparently easily taken, but it proved to be a very firm one. No one, even when difficulties in forming the cabinet were created, ever suggested that the number should be increased to take in all who had a major claim to be included. Yet to adhere to the number thirteen was to attempt to govern the new federation with a cabinet larger by only one than the cabinet used in the Province of Canada.

5. John Boyd, Sir George Etienne Cartier, Bart., (Toronto, 1914) pp. 283-86.

6. The delegates did not leave London at the same time. Tupper returned to Halifax in March, Macdonald did not return till early in May.  
See Creighton, D., The Road to Confederation (Toronto, 1964) p. 430-31.

7. Pope, Sir Joseph, Memoirs of The Right Hon. Sir John Alexander Macdonald (Toronto, 1930) p. 349.





This view was as firmly held to by those who saw the new provincial governments as having very subordinate roles to play as by those who saw them as carrying much of the work of the governments they succeeded. Nothing could be more indicative of the firmness with which the general concept of limited government was held.

The number of positions in the cabinet to be allotted to each province was also easily agreed upon. Nova Scotia was to have two, New Brunswick two, Quebec four, and Ontario five. This allocation was to be as rigidly maintained as was the total, indeed, any departure from the number assigned to each province would have necessitated not only a change in the total, but proportionate changes in the representation of each province.

A student of the formation of Confederation as a whole is reminded of the discussions at Charlottetown, Quebec and Westminster and in the debates of the various legislatures as to the composition of the House of Commons and the Senate. The composition of the former rested on the principle of representation by population. This principle had been accepted by the coalition of Canadian parties formed in June, 1864, and was fundamental to the creation of the union. Once accepted, however, it acted automatically under the formula embodied in Section 51 of the British North America Act, by which Quebec continued to have the sixty-five members it had had as Canada East in the Province of Canada. The number of representatives of the other provinces was to be decided by dividing sixty-five into the population of Quebec at the



last decennial census, and the number so obtained into the population of each of the other provinces, to obtain the number of members each province should have.<sup>8</sup>

The Senate rested firmly on the basis of equality of representation from each of the three regions: the Atlantic Provinces, Canada East and Canada West (Quebec and Ontario). Twenty-four Senators were allotted to each section, the number of Legislative Councillors from each of Canada East and West under the Act of 1856.

The same kind of thinking as to the desirability, indeed the necessity, of providing representation of both sections and population informed the thinking as to the composition of the cabinet. Each section was to have four members, with the most populous providing the Prime Minister. The members were to represent both territorial sections and population. But the cabinet representatives were to represent regions in their sections, or provinces, and population in its actual varieties, political, sectarian, and economic interest, at least roughly and as far as might be. The Commons, it may be said, represented number, the Senate section, the cabinet weight - weight, colour, tone. The representative character of the cabinet was, in short, to be a much subtler thing than representation as provided by the Commons or the Senate.

8. Kennedy, W. P. M., Documents of the Canadian Constitution, 1759-1915 (Toronto, 1918) p. 611.  
Dent, J. C., The Last Forty Years (Toronto 1881) Vol. II, pp. 468-69.





#### IV The Formation of the Cabinet of 1867

The truth of this last statement was to be revealed by the process of forming the cabinet of 1867. Once the total and the allotment of members by provinces had been agreed on, the choice of persons to make up the members for each province was left, correctly of course, to the Prime Minister-designate, John A. Macdonald. To this task, as well as that of recommending appointments to the Senate, and other positions to be filled, Macdonald addressed himself after his return from England and during the remainder of May and in early June, 1867.<sup>9</sup> The new cabinet had to be ready to take office on July 1, 1867.<sup>10</sup>

The choice of members from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick was easy. Macdonald wisely left it in effect to the Maritime leaders themselves, Tupper and Tilley. In Nova Scotia the two elements, Conservative and Liberal, which made up those who supported Nova Scotia's entry into Confederation, had to be represented. From which part of the province the member came was not of great importance. Tupper of course, who had led the province into Confederation as Conservative premier, was an inevitable choice. He named as his colleague, Adams G. Archibald, a Liberal and a fervent supporter of Confederation.<sup>11</sup> Archibald sat for Colchester, in east central Nova Scotia, but practised

9. Creighton, D., John A. Macdonald: The Young Politician (Toronto, 1956) p. 471.

10. Privy Council sworn in on July 1, 1867, with exception of Kenny, who was sworn in on the 4th.

11. See Pope, Memoirs of Sir John A. Macdonald, p. 348; also, Tupper, Sir Charles, Recollections of Sixty Years (Toronto, 1914) p. 52.



law in Halifax, therefore representing the capital as well as his county. Tupper, as member for Cumberland, represented rural Nova Scotia.

In New Brunswick Tilley was as inevitable a choice as Tupper in Nova Scotia. At Macdonald's request, he recommended Peter Mitchell, a prominent Liberal supporter of Confederation. As he was from a North Shore constituency, and Tilley from the St. John valley, the two main sections of the province were each represented.<sup>12</sup>

It was actually in the choice of representatives from the new provinces of Ontario and Quebec that trouble occurred, and that trouble actually arose in the province of Quebec. It is nevertheless of some slight advantage to begin with the situation in Ontario, because it at least illustrates the kind of difficulty Macdonald faced in forming the cabinet, and particularly with respect to Quebec. In Canada West the Reformers had elected forty-four members in the last provincial election, that of 1863.<sup>13</sup> It was this body of Reformers who had with some exceptions followed Brown into the coalition of 1864. They as a body, but with further exceptions, did not follow him out of the coalition after he left the government early in 1866. The majority continued to vote with the government.<sup>14</sup>

12. Creighton, The Young Politician, p. 472.

13. For the election results of 1863 see Paul G. Cornell, The Alignment of Political Groups in Canada 1841-1867 (Toronto, 1962) Figure VI gives the members of each parliament, 1841-1867. The returns for the election of 1863 were: Tory 20, Reformer 3, Grit 41, Unknown 1.

14. Ibid., p. 60. Cornell states the effect on party lines caused by Brown's withdrawal from the coalition.



This general strength and continued support, together with the need to strengthen the coalition Reformers against Brown's endeavour to build a new Reform, or Liberal, party, enabled the coalition Reformers, with William McDougall as their spokesman, to demand three of the five seats allotted to Ontario in the federal cabinet. McDougall's and Howland's measure of success in blunting the edge of Brown's attempt to win back coalition Reformers to the Reform party by a convention called in Toronto in June, 1867, strengthened the coalition Reformers' position.<sup>15</sup> In making their demand, they could point to the Prime Ministership having gone to Macdonald, and imply, as was true, that it really counted for more than one. Macdonald could only assent, even if, like a recent biographer, he felt it was hard on the Conservatives that they should not have three representatives.<sup>16</sup> Ontario had twenty-two Conservative members at the time of dissolution in the last Parliament of the Province of Canada, and he had no doubt, as proved to be the case, that they would increase their number in the first federal election. They in fact did so to the total of sixty-five out of eighty-two.

Three Reformers and two Conservatives, four of recent British ancestry, one, W. P. Howland, an American by birth, all Protestants, made up the representation of Ontario. There was,

15. D. Creighton, The Young Politician, p. 471.

16. Sir Joseph Pope, Memoirs of Sir John Alexander Macdonald, p. 349. Also see W. L. Morton, "Formation of the First Federal Cabinet," Canadian Historical Review XXXVI, 2, (June, 1955), pp. 115-16. Point four of McDougall's letter to Macdonald states his request for three Liberals, which Macdonald had agreed to.





of course, no French representative. Although the Catholics of Ontario numbered 274,166 in 1871, no French member sat for any Ontario riding in 1866, or in 1867.<sup>17</sup> Ontario was a British and Protestant province, although with a considerable minority of Scots and Irish Catholics.

The Ontario representation was, then, relatively easily decided. But the process revealed how intransigent partisan demands could be, and the history of the Ontario section of the cabinet, as will be discussed below, was not a happy one.

It was in forming the Quebec section, however, that Macdonald nearly came to grief and the formation of the first federal cabinet nearly ended in collapse. When Tupper and Tilley came to Ottawa early in June to aid Macdonald, they found him in despair and on the point of asking Monck to summon George Brown to form a ministry.<sup>18</sup> This was no doubt a strategem to counteract the various pressures on him, but the suggestion in itself was one of great seriousness and almost unthinkable as a possible outcome of the attempt to have the new Confederation governed by the men who had led in its formation rather than by those who had helped only part way to success, had opposed it, or had criticized it in some aspect or other. Nothing could better demonstrate the difficulty of forming the cabinet, caught as Macdonald was between the rigid limitations on the total number agreed on and the related numbers of provincial representation

17. See Canadian Almanac, 1866 to 1870 (Toronto, 1870).

18. Tupper, Recollection of Sixty Years, p. 53.



on the one hand, and the necessities of representation in the cabinet for the province of Quebec.

The representation of that province was the last subordinate section to be fitted into the general mosaic of the cabinet. As in Ontario, the process of forming the Quebec representation began with a demand for a certain number of seats for reasons that had to be accepted. This was the demand of Cartier to have three French Canadians, all of course Catholics, in the cabinet.<sup>19</sup>

The demand was, to say the least, moderate. There had always been four French Canadian members in the cabinets in the Province of Canada since 1848.<sup>20</sup> To ask for three was to give up one representative, a vivid example of the result of Cartier's acceptance of a minority position for the French in Confederation. Having surrendered one, Cartier could well feel that he must insist on three. The serious and sustained resistance to Confederation as a surrender to English Canada that would in the long run be disastrous for French Canada by Dorion and the Rouges made it the more necessary, and for Cartier to argue that it was necessary. Even as it was, 943,253 French Catholic Canadians would be represented by only three cabinet members, while 168,313 English would have one. Moreover, although it was not an argument advanced at the time, the fact that there was

19. See Creighton, D. The Young Politician, p. 473.

Boyd, J., Sir George Etienne Cartier, p. 282.

20. Cornell, Alignment of Political Groups in Canada, 1841-67, p. 56. He does not give the figures for 1848 but says that the cabinet of 1864 followed the same lines as its predecessor, which had four French Canadians.





no French-Canadian minister from any other province, despite the French of Ontario and the Maritimes, justifies the demand in the light of history. Finally, to have had only two French Canadian members would have been both obviously unjust and quite intolerable to French sentiment, and would have played right into the hands of Dorion. In his pamphlet on Confederation that critic of the federal scheme took note of the decrease that would take place in French representation in the cabinet.<sup>21</sup>

In view of that change and the pressure of the Rouge opposition to Confederation, it is not surprising that there is even in the scanty records of the struggle over cabinet formation in 1867 some indication of demands for a fourth French Canadian or at least for some alternative, such as a speakership. In particular, Joseph Cauchon, probably on personal as well as national grounds, sought a position in the cabinet in addition to the three agreed upon. When that was refused, he apparently then became a rival for the speakership of the Commons to John Rose of Montreal when Rose was considered for that position.<sup>22</sup> In the end Cauchon was given the speakership of the Senate.

The final agreement, however, was on the three Cartier had insisted on, himself, Hector-Louis Langevin and Jean-Charles Chapais. These formed the representation of French Canada in

21. A. A. Dorion, La Confederation Couronnement De Dix Années De Mauvais Administration (Montreal, Des Presses Du Journal "Les Pays," 1867.)

22. Pope, Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, pp. 50-52. Letter from Macdonald to the Hon. John Rose, dated October 8, 1867. Also see P.A.C. Macdonald Papers, 26, A, 1 (b), 258.



Quebec. Here, as elsewhere, the resolution to limit the total members of the cabinet held.

In effect, however, Cartier had accepted both a reduced number of French members in a cabinet which was, more than it was anything else, a successor to the cabinet of the Province of Canada, and the members of which did not take any account of the French population outside Quebec. This combined reduction and under-representation on the basis of population Cartier had to accept and defend in the face of the articulate, outspoken and not unpopular resistance of the Rouges to Confederation. There could scarcely be a clearer illustration of what Confederation involved for French Canada. No wonder that the bishops felt obliged to use their authority and influence in support of the accomplished fact of Confederation.<sup>23</sup>

At this point it is pertinent to ask to what extent the Rouge resistance to Confederation took note of the formation of the cabinet. L'Union Nationale, the Rouge journal launched to oppose Confederation, was in fact severely critical of the diminution of French influence and members, as Dorion was in his pamphlet attack on Confederation. It does not seem, however, that the cabinet was especially criticized. It was attacked as a consequence, the first consequence, of the adverse results, as the Rouges saw them, of Confederation as a whole on the place of French Canadians in British North America. They would have preferred a loose association with Ontario, and none with

23. Walter Ullman, "The Quebec Bishops and Confederation," C.H.R. No. 3 (Sept., 1963), pp. 213-34.



the Maritimes. Confederation was to them a concerted effort by an English majority to swamp the French minority. The cabinet as formed in 1867 only pointed up that fact.

To return to the theme of cabinet formation, once it was agreed that there were to be three French members, it followed that the fourth was to be English. For this there could be really only one choice. That was Alexander Galt. The first advocate of Confederation in the practical politics of Canada, he had every claim on general grounds to be a member of the first cabinet of Confederation. The active director of the British American Land Company and of the St. Lawrence and Atlantic Railway, he had all his active life been involved in the development and politics of the Eastern Townships, the English sector of Quebec. He had been since March, 1853, its political representative from Sherbrooke. As a financial man, he was an important member of the business community of Montreal. A former minister of finance, and the financial architect of Confederation, he was the obvious choice for the ministry of finance. Moreover, he was a Protestant, and the English community of Quebec was predominantly Protestant. There ought to have been no question whatever of his appointment once it was clear that the fourth member from Quebec was to be English.

Yet it was, in fact, the appointment of the English member from Quebec that was the cause of the formation of the cabinet in 1867 nearly ending in failure. Indeed, failure was so near that only an unexampled personal sacrifice averted disaster. There were two reasons for the near failure. One was that the





English population of Quebec was Catholic as well as Protestant, Irish as well as Scots, English and American. The other reason was the person and the service to Confederation of Thomas D'Arcy McGee, himself Irish and Catholic.

McGee had in his own right probably as good a claim on the general grounds of service in establishing Confederation as had Galt, or anybody but Macdonald, Cartier and Brown. Poet, refugee, immigrant, adventurer, McGee had used his unusual gifts to persuade the Catholic Irish community of Canada, and especially the Irish proletariat of Montreal and Toronto to choose Confederation rather than Fenianism, a British Canadian rather than an American future. He did this by a career in politics, into which sphere of Canadian life he brought the Catholic Irish, with its excitements, its rewards, and its prestige, and by his eloquent and sustained advocacy of Confederation as a society in which all, including the Irish, would enjoy tolerance, justice and equality. It was a great achievement, and it carried with it dangers no other Father of Confederation was to run, as was revealed when McGee was assassinated by a Fenian agent on April 7, 1868. So great was his claim that Macdonald had promised him a place in the cabinet.<sup>24</sup>

The final point in the cabinet-making of 1867 was, therefore, the making of a choice between Galt and McGee. A choice was impossible on the face of it, and neither man would, or could because of those he represented, withdraw his claim. The principle

24. See Pope, Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, 1840-91, pp. 42-43. Letter from McGee to Macdonald April 9, 1867.



of a cabinet limited to thirteen, with an allotment of four from Quebec, and the principle of sectional and communal representation had thus produced a deadlock, and Macdonald could not break it.

This was the situation when Tilley and Tupper reached Ottawa in late June, 1867. They were dismayed to find that the accomplishment of the general agreement reached in England had proved so difficult to accomplish, and was so near failure. It was by their intervention that the deadlock was broken. By an act of quite unusual self-abnegation, Tupper, apparently at his own initiative, persuaded McGee to give up his claims and the representation of the Irish Catholics if he, Tupper, did the same in favour of a Catholic from Nova Scotia, Edward Kenny, who was also to become a member of the Senate. McGee, with perhaps a greater sacrifice of aspiration and position, agreed and the stalemate was ended. Both were promised compensation, of course. Tupper received his as agent for the Canadian government in England, but McGee was murdered before he received the comparatively obscure but permanent post that would have freed him for writing.<sup>25</sup> For both, in any event, the sacrifice was greater than any immediate compensation.

Such was the cabinet sworn in on July 1, 1867. Its

25. Skelton, Isabel, Life of Thomas D'Arcy McGee (Gardenvale, 1925) p. 534. "He was to have been appointed Commissioner of Patents, with a salary of \$3,200 a year."





composition was as follows: -

<u>Province</u>	<u>Faith</u>	<u>Party</u> <sup>26</sup>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Office</u>
Ontario	Protestant	Conservative	Sir John A. Macdonald	Prime Minister & Minister of Justice
Ontario	Protestant	Conservative	Alexander Campbell	Postmaster-General
Ontario	Protestant	Liberal	W. P. Howland	Minister of Inland Revenue
Ontario	Protestant	Liberal	W. McDougall	Minister of Public Works
Ontario	Protestant	Liberal	A. J. Ferguson-Blair	President of the Council
Quebec	Roman Catholic	Conservative	George-Etienne Cartier	Minister of Militia
Quebec	Roman Catholic	Conservative	Hector-Louis Langevin	Secretary of State for Canada
Quebec	Roman Catholic	Conservative	Jean-Charles Chapais	Minister of Agriculture
Quebec	Protestant	Liberal	Alexander T. Galt	Minister of Finance
New Brunswick	Protestant	Liberal	Peter Mitchell	Minister of Marine and Fisheries
New Brunswick	Protestant	Liberal	Leonard Tilley	Minister of Customs
Nova Scotia	Protestant	Liberal	Adams G. Archibald	Secretary of State for the Provinces
Nova Scotia	Irish-Catholic	Conservative	Edward Kenny	Receiver-General

26. For party affiliation see: J. C. Dent, The Last Forty Years, p. 471, W. L. Morton, "The Formation of the First Federal Cabinet, Canadian Historical Review, XXXVI, 2, (June, 1955) p. 118.



The changes in membership during its life will be traced below.

The next step in the formation of the new government was the organization of the legislature and of the new provincial governments and the patronage involved, and as lightly as it was involved with appointments to the cabinet, that process will be touched on here.

The new provincial governments might in the lieutenant-governorships have added much to the available patronage, had not the still continuing Fenian menace led to the appointment or retention in office of soldiers, Lieutenant-General William Fenwick Williams, who had governed Nova Scotia since 1866, Major-General Charles Hastings Doyle in New Brunswick, and Major-General Henry William Stisted, appointed lieutenant-governor of Ontario in 1867. For Québec, however, Sir Narcisse-Fortunat Belleau, the stop-gap Premier of the Canadian coalition government since 1865, was made lieutenant-governor of his native province, the first French Canadian to hold such a position under the Crown. His appointment may reasonably be seen as at once symbolic of the restoration of the government of Quebec to the Québécois and as some compensation to French Canadians, for their under-representation in the federation cabinet. So perhaps also was the appointment of Cartier's protégé, P. J. O. Chauveau as Premier.

A simultaneous step was the official appointment of those it had been agreed should be Senators. These seventy-two men were chiefly former Legislative Councillors of the three colonies



who had supported the formation of Confederation. None, however, was appointed Senator to console him for not being appointed to the cabinet. An unusual feature, by the standard of later practice, was the number of Senators who held cabinet posts in the original cabinet.<sup>27</sup>

#### V The Cabinet 1867 - 1873

Before proceeding to discuss whether French Canadians suffered from adverse discrimination in having only three representatives in the cabinet of 1867, it is desirable to note to what extent the pattern of representation in the cabinet as first appointed continued over the life of that body from 1867 to 1873.

It must first be noted that there continued to be three French Canadian members until Cartier's death on May 20, 1873. There is no reason to doubt that he would have been replaced by another French Canadian had the cabinet survived the Pacific Scandal. During that period of six years, the number of posts in the cabinet, occupied, or to be filled, continued to be thirteen until November 16, 1869, when James C. Aikins became minister without portfolio. As he was English, Protestant and from Ontario the balance was to some extent tilted against French

27. In all, five Cabinet Ministers were appointed to the Senate. Of these, four were original appointees, A. J. Fergusson-Blair and Alexander Campbell from Ontario, Edward Kenny from Nova Scotia and Peter Mitchell from New Brunswick. To these was added J. C. Chapais following his defeat in the election of 1867.





Canada.<sup>28</sup> Aikins' appointment reflected the growth of Conservative strength in Ontario, and was meant to correct the original discrimination against that party in Ontario rather than the balance achieved over all in 1867.

The first change that occurred was caused in the fall of 1867 by the resignation of Galt following the bankruptcy of the Commercial Bank in the direction of which he was involved. Thus the English and Protestant post in Quebec was open. This was the occasion for a revival, and a revelation, of the hope the French Canadian politicians had not wholly abandoned of continuing to have four members in the cabinet, or at least some equivalent of a fourth, such as a speakership. Cauchon was the politician whose name was mentioned for such a post.

Galt's resignation led Macdonald to approach John Rose, an English and Protestant financier of Montreal, who had been a member of the Parliament of Canada for some years and a cabinet minister from August, 1858 to June, 1861. Macdonald had already considered him for the speakership of the Commons. After some discussion the matter was settled by Rose becoming Minister of Finance in succession to Galt, and Cauchon, Speaker of the Senate. Thus, the original pattern was maintained, and the French claim recognized to a degree.

28. Pope, Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald, pp. 102-105. Letter from Sir John Macdonald to Hon. John Rose, November 16, 1869. Macdonald expresses the view that Aikins "will come in unconditionally under Hincks." Hincks became Minister of Finance on October 9, 1869. Both men were from Ontario.



Even earlier in time, though not in consequence, was the defeat in the general election of 1867 of the English and Protestant representative from Nova Scotia, Adams G. Archibald, the Secretary of State for the Provinces. He remained Secretary after his defeat, as is legally possible, until April 30, 1868. He was kept in office, and the office kept vacant thereafter, until a successor from his own province could be found. This proved to be Joseph Howe who, when "better terms" had been negotiated for Nova Scotia, entered the cabinet as President of the Council, on January 30, 1869, and became Secretary of State for the Provinces on November 16 of that year.

The effect of the reduction of the cabinet to twelve in April, 1868, and the loss of representation to Nova Scotia through the lack of a cabinet minister in the Commons was increased by the resignation and death of the President of the Council, A. J. Fergusson-Blair, on December 29, 1867. And on July 14, 1868, W. P. Howland resigned to become Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario. Not until Howe's appointment on January 30, 1869, was the post filled. The number of the cabinet thus stood at eleven from May 1, 1868, to January 30, 1869.

In this there was little loss to public business, for neither portfolio had much administration to carry on. And there was no loss in representation to French Canada. In fact, it gained relatively, although the consideration was almost certainly an academic one.

Neither did the retirement of Rose and the appointment of Sir Francis Hincks on October 9, 1869, alter the pattern





established in 1867, criticized as was the appointment of Hincks on other grounds. As Hincks sat for North Renfrew in Ontario, he filled the vacancy left by Howland's resignation, but the vacancy in Quebec remained.

It was in fact the acquisition of Rupert's Land and the North Western Territory that precipitated, or gave excuse for the one major cabinet re-shuffle before that which followed the election of 1872. One of the names most associated with the acquisition of the Northwest, and the name of one of the least popular members of the cabinet was that of William McDougall. The steady strengthening of the provincial Liberal party and of the federal Conservative party in Ontario also made McDougall less and less useful as a coalition Liberal representative of Ontario. It was, therefore, to make reward an easy and honourable means of dismissal to appoint him lieutenant-governor-designate of the North West Territory, in September, 1869. It was also to bring pretty well to an end the Liberal-Conservative coalition of 1864 in Ontario. The way was now open to re-organize the cabinet while McDougall made his way to Red River.

The first move had already been noted, the transfer of Howe from the Presidency of the Council to the Secretaryship of State for the Provinces. Howe was succeeded in the Presidency by Edward Kenny on November 16, 1869, who vacated the office of Receiver-General. J. C. Chapais, who succeeded him on November 16, 1869, left the more important, but less honorific portfolio of Agriculture. Christopher Dunkin, a Conservative and critic of Confederation, who supported it when carried,



took his place, and filled the position of English and Protestant representative left vacant by Rose.

The vacancy left by Howland as Minister of Inland Revenue was filled by Alexander Morris, a Conservative, thus replacing a Reformer.

At the same time Macdonald took the unusual step of bringing in as minister without portfolio the Conservative J. C. Aikins of Ontario. This was to meet the growing Conservative demand from Ontario for greater representation. Thus the cabinet came to number fourteen, the increase in representation going to the Conservatives of Ontario. At this number of departments it remained until the end, although the departments did not always have each its own minister.

These changes were only the first phase of two. The second took place on December 8, 1869. Langevin was transferred from the office of Secretary of State to that of Minister of Public Works, a definite promotion that balanced Chapais' comparative demotion, and gave a French Conservative the control of patronage the Ontario Grit McDougall had had. The way was then open to give Aikins the Secretaryship Langevin had just vacated.

In the re-organized cabinet Conservative strength had greatly risen, and Liberal had declined. The cabinet was one greater in number than in 1867, but in pattern of representation was what it had been when formed in 1867. The representation of French Canada had declined relatively in numbers; in weight, it had increased.

This general statement remained true until May, 1873, as



did the particular statement with respect to French Canadian representation. When Kenny resigned on June 20, 1870, to be Administrator of Nova Scotia, Charles Tupper at last entered the cabinet in his place. But all the insistence on the need of Irish Catholic representation was apparently ignored until John O'Connor of Ontario succeeded Tupper on July 2, 1872. Tupper succeeded Morris as Minister of Inland Revenue at that date, when Morris became Chief Justice of Manitoba. Tupper followed Tilley as Minister of Customs on February 22, 1873, when Tilley succeeded Hincks as Minister of Finance.

In these, as in other changes, the basic pattern was preserved. When Dunkin went to the bench in October, 1871, he was succeeded by John Henry Pope, English and Protestant, of Quebec. When Howe resigned on May 1, 1873, to become Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, T. N. Gibbs, English and Protestant of Ontario was brought in to be Secretary of State for the Provinces, and Hugh McDonald, English and Catholic, of Nova Scotia was brought in as President of the Council on June 14, 1873. He succeeded O'Connor, who succeeded Alexander Campbell, who became minister of the newly created Department of the Interior.

One change did occur in the French membership in the cabinet. Chapais resigned from the cabinet on January 30, 1873. He was replaced by Theodore Robitaille of Bonaventure constituency, province of Quebec.

The really critical change was that caused by the death of Cartier on May 20, 1873. No French successor was in sight. None was found before the ministry was defeated and resigned on November 6, 1873. This departure from the pattern of 1867 was





not a violation of principle, and aroused no protest at the time. It was, if significant at all in the summer of the Pacific Scandal, an illustration of the difficulty of getting together a cabinet at once representative and reasonably experienced and competent.

## VI Conclusions

It now remains to ask, what is the significance of the above description and analysis of the formation and maintenance of the cabinet of 1867.

First, and to repeat, it is necessary to keep in mind the background of the twenty-five years preceding Confederation. In that quarter century, French Canadians passed from being a majority in Canada to being a minority. The fundamental cause of the change was the great British immigration.

Confederation, of course, increased the effect of that change. Except as offset by the Acadian French of the Maritimes, the French became even more a minority than before. In consequence, to give French Canadians a just and proper share in the cabinet it was necessary to appoint French cabinet members who in number, importance of office, and personal weight, would be equal to the relative position of French Canadians in Confederation. The problem posed an equation which could be only roughly solved at best. Good will and some measure of mutual confidence were indispensable to success.

What then was owing to French Canada in the circumstances of French Canada and what did it get in the formation of the



federal cabinet?

Again, it is necessary to recapitulate the other features of Confederation. The French Canadians of Quebec received by Confederation, with certain limitations designed to safeguard the English minority, control of the Province of Quebec.<sup>29</sup> With Belleau as lieutenant-governor, and Chauveau, Cartier's nominee as Premier, that province was governed by French Canadians.

At the same time Quebec and its French Canadians were given a fixed representation in the Commons and in the Senate.<sup>30</sup>

The relative political position of French Canadians in Quebec was thus assured in Confederation. Quebec, it should be noted, however, received no special benefit like the Intercolonial Railway or the Pacific Railway, although it participated to some degree in both.

In the cabinet, the French Canadians of Quebec were assured by the general agreement of the delegates to the Westminster Conference of three seats in the cabinet of thirteen. Taking the population of the Canada of 1867 at 3,250,000, this meant one minister for each 250,000 of population. Taking the French population of Quebec at the round figure of 900,000, this meant one cabinet minister for each 300,000 of French population.<sup>31</sup>

29. British North America Act, 1867, Section 22, Subsection 3.

30. British North America Act, 1867, fixed representation in the House of Commons assured Quebec, Section 51 (1); fixed representation in the Senate assured Quebec, Section 22 (3).

31. Census of Canada, 1870-71, V. 18, 20. The French population of Quebec in 1861 is given as 847,615. For 1871, it was 929,817.





Thus Confederation meant the loss of one cabinet post to the French Canadians of Quebec, as four was the usual number in the ministries of the Province of Canada.

In the assignment of portfolios Cartier asked and got the then, in his opinion, "the most difficult of all" the portfolios in the cabinet.<sup>32</sup> His two colleagues, however, received relatively minor posts, although the office of Secretary of State was a dignified one, and that of Agriculture included the important and significant responsibility for immigration.

This position was held until December, 1869, when it improved with the promotion of Langevin to the major ministry of Public Works. With the death of Cartier in May, 1873, it collapsed and had not been repaired when the Macdonald ministry resigned in November, 1873.

As against the English of Quebec, both in numbers and importance of office, the Ministry of Finance, the French were under-represented, one to 330,000 against one to 205,000, by the census figures of 1871.<sup>33</sup> As against the Maritimes the French were greatly under-represented, one to 330,000 as against one to 170,000. But only Tilley of Maritime members ever held a major cabinet post, those of Customs and Finance.

In comparison with Ontario, the French did better, as it was one for 330,000 against one for 324,000, using the figures

32. Boyd, Sir George Etienne Cartier, p. 285.

33. Census of Canada, 1870-71, V. 20. This figure includes the Irish population of Quebec, given as 123,478.



of 1871. But Ontario had the Prime Ministership and the weighty portfolios of Justice, Public Works, and Postmaster-General.

The French of the other provinces received no representation.

It is possible, to hold, therefore, that the French were in some respects under-represented in the cabinet, both in numbers and weight of portfolios held. An ardent nationalist might well do so, and then point to the collapse of the French position after May, 1873, as evidence of bad faith. It must be said that the French might well have been given four seats rather than three, as against the English of Quebec and the Maritimes.

There were, however, offsetting factors. The first was the great personal weight of Cartier, always until his electoral defeat of 1872, the second man in the government. The three members were also undoubtedly the voice of French and Catholic Canada in the cabinet. Langevin, who had so much to do with the formation of Section 93 of the B.N.A. Act, must have spoken for the Acadian French in the New Brunswick School Question.

The advancement of Langevin also helped offset any under-weighting of French representation.

The collapse in 1873 of French representation in the cabinet, caused in part, it is interesting to note, by the growing nationalisme Confederation had helped inflame, was not of significance to the principles of cabinet formation, though very much so to the matter of finding a man both competent and representative when desired. The Bleu tradition was ceasing to attract the fervent young men.

What emerges from these considerations is the roughness



of any assessment. Representation in the cabinet cannot be precisely measured, as can representation by population or by section. Too many intangibles, too many personal factors, are a necessary part of the equation. And a cabinet, to be a cabinet, that is, a confidential advisory body, must be limited.

Yet the real need in 1867, it would seem, was a cabinet of fifteen rather than thirteen. This would have allowed the French four members and given Ontario one more. Such a total would however, only have eased the formation of the cabinet. It would not have altered the relative position of the French.

What does finally emerge, therefore, is the over-representation of the Maritimes. Any student of Confederation will understand how necessary it was to be generous to those provinces. This necessity prevented, however, bringing the representations of Quebec and Ontario up by decreasing that of the Maritimes. To have taken one each from Nova Scotia and New Brunswick to add to Quebec and Ontario would have given a more equitable representation over all than that actually adopted. But it might well have disrupted Confederation, and no such change was ever suggested by any responsible French or English politician. These adjustments were to be worked out in later and larger cabinets.

The cabinet of 1867, thus, with great difficulty, worked out a rough justice in terms of Canadian convention. Those who suffered suffered only slightly. They were the English Conservatives of Ontario, and the French of Quebec. Those who benefited much were the Maritimers, but this was a necessity of Confederation. And insofar as the French may have suffered





it was not from ill will or a desire to repress on the part of the English. It arose from the whole circumstances of Confederation, the deliberate ending of duality in the cabinet and the impossibility of achieving precise equality in cabinet representation.

All cabinet ministers are not in fact equal, but they are persons, and it is impossible to employ persons as vulgar fractions. The French should have had three and one half ministers, but it was necessary to settle on four or three.

The answers, then, to the questions posed with respect to the process of cabinet formation for the cabinet of 1867 are as follows:

1. Because of the decision to have a Prime Minister of pre-eminent status, it was impossible to recognize a French Canadian as a principal lieutenant, or co-Prime Minister. Yet in effect Cartier was such, both because of the past relations of Cartier and Macdonald in the cabinets of the Province of Canada since 1856, and because of Cartier's general weight and influence. There was thus no question but that Cartier should be Acting Prime Minister during Macdonald's illness from May to September in 1870.

2. There can be no doubt that Macdonald discussed with Cartier all matters relating to cabinet representation from Quebec, and that he accepted Cartier's nominations for his Quebec colleagues. Again, I think it is impossible to generalize about French-English relations in cabinet making and functioning in 1867-73. Cartier undoubtedly occupied a



special place, both because of the past and because of his own position. I am sure Macdonald discussed the general formation of the cabinet with him. Yet the whole endeavour was to make the Prime Minister, and this would have been true if he had been French instead of English, pre-eminent, and the final authority over the cabinet and government policy. Thus constitutional intent and Canadian practice and realities were opposed, and Macdonald had to resolve the conflict as best he could. He consulted freely; he reserved few matters to himself only. He did not accord Cartier a special position because he was French. He did consider him his senior and most trusted colleague because Cartier was Cartier.

3. It is not evident that there was discrimination against French Canadian ministers in the awarding of portfolios in the first instance, or in subsequent changes. They received the posts of their preference, or of their weight and experience, or special interest, when these were present. The one evident discrimination is that in the cabinet of 1867, as in all previous cabinets since 1841 and in all since, the Ministry of Finance was not entrusted to a French Canadian. The reason is simple. That ministry was always regarded as one to be given to an eminent member of the Canadian business community. There were few such French Canadians and none in political life. The matter seems not to have been remarked on in 1867-1873. This was a discrimination, of course, one arising out of the socio-economic structure of Canadian society. Until that structure was altered, discrimination would be practised, and





with the assent of French Canadians.

During the life of this cabinet no French Canadian held what is very much a French Canadian post, as Finance is an English one, the Ministry of Justice. The reason was that Macdonald chose to occupy it, because of his past experience and preferences, but in the main because of his great personal interest in the development of the system of justice in the new Dominion and because of his hopes the civil law might be consolidated in the Common Law provinces. As such, it was not, of course, any kind of discrimination.

4. There is no evidence known to me as to anything of bargaining, or agreements, on particular policies. In many ways, of course, this had all been done in the formulation of the terms of Confederation itself, e.g., the drawing up of Section 93, with the provisions made for the protection of minority rights in education.

5. The concept of duality was given up with the acceptance of Confederation. The three-one ratio for Quebec was agreed on and kept to by both French and English.

6. All members of the cabinet of 1867, including the French were supporters of Confederation - were indeed Fathers - and were called to the cabinet as such.

On the whole, the special circumstances of 1867 prevented the questions asked arising. Confederation had been accepted, dual representation had been ended, and a more extensive and complicated plan of cabinet representation had been agreed to by all parties as being fair in the circumstances.



## CHAPTER 2

### The Cabinet of 1878

By D. G. Creighton

#### I The 1878 Election: Changes in the Conservative High Command

In the general election of the 17th of September, 1878, the government of Alexander Mackenzie was decisively defeated by a majority even larger than that by which it had been confirmed in power over four years before. In 1874, the Liberals had won approximately sixty seats more than their opponents; in 1878, the Conservative majority was closer to seventy. "I resolved to reverse the verdict of 1874," Macdonald wrote proudly to a correspondent, "and have done so to my heart's content".<sup>1</sup> He had triumphed over the humiliation and defeat of the Pacific Scandal in a way that would have seemed utterly impossible less than five years ago. At that time, in the dark autumn and winter of 1873-74, he himself had assumed that his public career had ended for ever. On the 6th of November, 1873, the day after the resignation of his government, he had met the Conservative members assembled in caucus and had asked to be relieved of the leadership of the party. He had continued in his old post only because the Conservatives had unanimously begged him to do so; but he had publicly declared that he could be only a temporary leader and he had urged the party to find a suitable younger man as his successor.

1. Public Archives of Canada, Macdonald Papers, V. 524, Macdonald to Graham, 6 Nov. 1878.



For nearly two years after the catastrophe of the autumn of 1873, he had played a very inactive role in party politics; and even later he occasionally repeated his wish for an early retirement from public life. It was not, in fact, until 1876 that all doubts about his real position in the Conservative party were resolved. The beginning of the great debate over Canada's commercial policy, the Conservative adoption of the protective tariff, and the summer's triumphant speaking tour on the picnic grounds of Ontario drove home the conviction, in Macdonald's mind as well as in those of his increasingly ardent followers, that a Conservative victory in the next general election was a real possibility. The recovery of his old role as the dominant and fighting leader of a rejuvenated and purposeful party was completed during the following two years; and on the 18th of September there could be no doubt whatever that Lord Dufferin, the Governor General, would invite Sir John Macdonald to form the new administration.

Though Macdonald had run in the constituency of Kingston, he was living at that time in Toronto. And so, rather more surprisingly, was his principal Nova Scotian lieutenant, Charles Tupper. For both of them, long residence in Ottawa -- it had lasted for Macdonald from the autumn of 1865 to 1874 -- had served to weaken the connection with their places of origin; and for a good many years before that his relationship with Kingston had grown increasingly interrupted and tenuous. His old law firm, Macdonald and Patton, had already transferred its offices to Toronto. The resignation of his government and





the defeat of the party in the election of 1874 had driven him inevitably back upon his old profession as a means of livelihood; and in the autumn of 1875 he moved up to Toronto and soon afterwards established himself and his family in a house on St. George Street, close to University College. Less than a year later, Tupper followed him. Thrown back, like Macdonald, upon his old profession, he had been practising medicine in Ottawa during the winter and spending his summers in St. Andrews, New Brunswick; but the sudden death of his daughter-in-law decided him to move to Toronto in order to be close to his bereaved son, and in the early autumn of 1876, he bought a house on Jarvis Street. He had, of course, spent the last weeks of the campaign of 1878 in the Maritime Provinces; but when the election was over, he returned, like Macdonald, to Toronto.

Their propinquity, during the two years which preceded the "restoration" of 1878, was significant of much. From the first days of their association at the Charlottetown Conference, Macdonald had been deeply impressed by Tupper's great abilities and enormous force of character; and at the Quebec Conference they had made a "compact" to act together politically in the future. During the first Parliament Tupper's prominence in the party had steadily increased. The humiliation of the Pacific Scandal had left him absolutely untouched. He had been the principal critic of Liberal budgets and Liberal commercial and railway policies during the Mackenzie government; and in 1877, the year after he had moved to Toronto, he accompanied Macdonald on the first phase of the second series of political



picnics. It was at the first of these summer meetings, in Kingston on the 6th of June, that Macdonald formally introduced him as the heir-apparent to the leadership of the Conservative party of Canada. "I have long been anxious to retire from the position I have held," he told the Kingstonians, "and I am sure you will say, from the acquaintance that you have formed tonight with my friend, the honourable Charles Tupper, that when I do retire, he is the man who will well fill my place."<sup>2</sup>

Tupper's acknowledged prominence, as Macdonald's principal lieutenant and probable successor, was the result not only of his own abilities but also of the force of external circumstances. The long years from 1867 to 1878 had seen drastic changes in the upper ranks of the Conservative party leadership. Some of the leading principals of the Confederation years had vanished; the prestige of others had been tarnished or temporarily eclipsed; and although new reputations were in the making, not many were as yet secure and acknowledged. In Ontario and Quebec, perhaps more so than in the Atlantic Provinces, the shifting nature of the Conservative high command was clearly exemplified. In Ontario, the Reform wing of the Coalition of 1864, which William McDougall had tried so hard and so successfully to preserve in the composition of the first Dominion cabinet, was now, of course, a thing of the distant past. Fergusson Blair was dead, William Howland retired, and William McDougall had been seriously discredited by the ruin of his lieutenant-governorship in the

2. Mail (Toronto), 11 June, 1877.





Red River Rebellion. Their places in the Ontario division of Sir John Macdonald's first cabinet had been taken by straight Conservatives -- James Cox Aikins, John O'Connor, T. N. Gibbs; but these comparative new comers had not yet proved themselves to be more than regional leaders, or, as in the case of the Roman Catholic John O'Connor, the advocates of special interests. Alexander Campbell who, with Macdonald himself, had made up the Conservative part of the Ontario contingent in the first Dominion cabinet, was still, and would remain for some years yet, in public life. But, though a high-minded and earnest public servant, critical of Macdonald, yet loyal to him, he would never become a major force in the direction of Conservative party politics.

In the Province of Quebec, the changes had, if anything, been still more sweeping. Cartier, H. L. Langevin and J. C. Chapais were the three French-Canadians who had been given portfolios at the formation of Macdonald's first cabinet in 1867; but by the time of the election of 1874 all three of them had vanished either permanently or temporarily from political life. Sir George Cartier had died in May 1873, late in the history of the administration, when it was already deep in the troubles of the Pacific Scandal, and no new French-Canadian minister was appointed in his place. J. C. Chapais had resigned earlier, in January 1873, and his portfolio, the office of Receiver General, was given to Theodore Robitaille, the only new French-Canadian minister in the cabinet, whose brief tenure lasted for less than a year. In the wide gap left by all these changes it might well have seemed that Langevin



could have stepped confidently and with every prospect of permanent high command; but, in fact, the opportunity that might otherwise have been his had already been cancelled as a result of the Pacific Scandal. Since Cartier was dead, Langevin bore most of the ignominy of the Scandal in Quebec; and although he led the impoverished and embarrassed provincial Conservatives in the general election of 1874, he himself decided not to run. A year later, when he considered that he might safely venture to re-enter public life, he had the misfortune to run straight into another and only less serious kind of scandal. His election to the Charlevoix constituency, disputed under the provisions of the new elections act, became a celebrated case in the great controversy over "undue clerical influence" in politics, and travelled as high as the Supreme Court of Canada. The Charlevoix election was finally annulled, with costs charged to Langevin; and when the constituency was reopened, his second victory was also protested in the courts.<sup>3</sup> This time his election was confirmed; but the protracted legal battle had lasted well over a year, and Langevin emerged from it a somewhat bedraggled and unheroic figure. A late arrival in the third Parliament, he did not take his seat until the session of 1876, and until the court cases were settled, his position remained insecure. In the meantime, the real French-Canadian members of Macdonald's "Old Guard" had established themselves independently of his leadership, and L. F. R. Masson, the accomplished and able

3. B. Fraser, "The Political Career of Sir Hector Louis Langevin", Canadian Historical Review, V. 42, pp. 93-132.



member for Terrebonne had acquired a definite prominence in the group. When the dissolution came in 1878, Langevin had by no means captured Cartier's place as "chef" in Quebec; and in the election of the 17th September he suffered another crushing blow. Changing his constituency from the unlucky Charlevoix to Rimouski, he was beaten.

Apart, of course, from Macdonald himself, no member of the high command in Ontario and Quebec could seriously rival the continuity and importance of Tupper's services to the party. In his own region, the Atlantic Provinces, his pre-eminence could hardly be disputed either. In Nova Scotia, there had been an almost complete disappearance of the leading political figures, both Conservative and Liberal, of the Confederation years. Joseph Howe and Jonathan McCully, those two veteran journalistic rivals, were dead. Archibald was Lieutenant-Governor of Nova Scotia, Henry had been appointed a Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, and Hugh McDonald, an old Anti-Confederate who had briefly replaced Howe in the dying months of Macdonald's first administration, had been rewarded with a judgeship in Nova Scotia. One veteran Nova Scotian Conservative, who had joined Tupper's provincial administration as financial secretary in 1864, had made a promising, if brief, appearance in federal politics. Defeated in 1867, James McDonald had been elected for Pictou riding in 1872; his performance in the second Parliament had won the Chieftain's notice and McDonald had been made a member of the famous Select Committee of five which was set up to investigate the Huntington charges in





1873.<sup>4</sup> The election of 1874 interrupted his career in Parliament; but he was a persistent man and on the 17th September, 1878 he once more became federal member for Pictou.

Prince Edward Island, which had entered Confederation on the 1st of July, 1873, would probably have to be given a portfolio in the new Conservative ministry; but the Island representative, whoever he was, could hardly be expected to wield any very great influence in the senior councils of the party. The New Brunswick ministers were likely to enjoy a greater authority; but, in the political circumstances of 1878, their consequence was also slightly reduced. Tilley, Peter Mitchell, and R. D. Wilmot, the three principals in the great New Brunswick Confederation victory of 1866, were still in public life; and Tilley, who had become Minister of Finance in Macdonald's first administration on the retirement of Sir Francis Hincks, was undoubtedly Tupper's most serious rival for the post of the Chieftain's second in command. But Tilley had been appointed Lieutenant-Governor of New Brunswick in 1873 and for five years he had been compelled to stand outside party politics. His term of office had come to an end in the middle of July, 1878, and for the last two months of the election campaign he had vigorously taken over the leadership of the New Brunswick Conservatives.<sup>5</sup> But in a province where the Liberals

4. D. Creighton, John A. Macdonald, the Old Chieftain (Toronto, 1955), p. 154.

5. Macdonald Papers, V. 276. Tilley to Macdonald, 26 July, 1878.



were well led and the distrust of protection strong, not even Tilley was able to win a last minute victory; and New Brunswick, giving the Conservatives only five out of sixteen seats, was the only province in the Dominion in which they did not win a majority.

Among the fallen was Peter Mitchell, who had been Minister of Fisheries for the whole duration of the first Macdonald administration. Mitchell was a bumptious, jealous North Shore politician, whose truculent policies had made difficulties for Macdonald in the years immediately preceding the Treaty of Washington.<sup>6</sup> He had, however, given the Conservatives steady service during the third Parliament; and if he had been re-elected in Northumberland, he would possibly have had a good chance of office, despite his party's feeble showing in the Province as a whole. But Mitchell had been beaten; and if he were given a portfolio, a seat would have to be found for him, presumably in New Brunswick, where reopening a constituency might be a risky business. Mitchell, in short, was a good deal less fortunately placed than his old associate of 1866, R. D. Wilmot. Wilmot was a Senator, as Mitchell had been before he resigned to enter the Commons; and Wilmot, though less able and prominent than Mitchell, was available, if he should be thought worthy of office.

There could be no doubt about it. In 1878, Charles Tupper occupied a special position in the federal Conservative party. The extent of his authority and responsibility was widest in

6. Ibid., V. 517, 1 Nov. 1870.





Nova Scotia and fairly ample in the Maritime Provinces as a whole. But he was no longer exclusively identified, as Tilley still remained, with a particular province, or even with a particular region. To an appreciable extent, he had become a Canadian figure. His role as Macdonald's principal lieutenant was established.

## II Written Representations from September 17 to October 8

Mackenzie did not hurry with the resignation of his cabinet. Lord Dufferin, whose term as Governor General had come to an end and who was to leave for home that autumn, wanted to preside over the installation of the new government as one of the last acts of his Canadian career; but also, as he intended to leave by the St. Lawrence route, he hoped that the transfer of power would not be too long delayed. Mackenzie did not make things easy for him. The election had taken place on the 17th of September, and two weeks went by without a sign of the beaten government's departure. "I am waiting to be summoned," Macdonald wrote to Goldwin Smith on the 1st of October, "Lord Dufferin (entre nous) having told me, when here, to keep my carpet-bag ready."<sup>7</sup> But it was not until Saturday, the 5th of October that a telegram arrived from Government House in Ottawa, informing him that Mackenzie's resignation was imminent and appointing Wednesday, the 9th, for an interview with the Governor General

7. Joseph Pope, Correspondence of Sir John Macdonald (Toronto, n.d.), p. 245.



in Montreal.<sup>8</sup>

In the meantime, Macdonald simply waited. Until Mackenzie's intentions were definitely established and his resignation become official, nothing could openly be done. Macdonald did nothing. No potential cabinet ministers were observed arriving in Toronto from out of town. But Tupper had, of course, reached home again and was available for consultation; and if personal appeals to the future Prime Minister from others were still a little premature, it was always possible to write to his house on St. George Street. Congratulations, suggestions, recommendations began to descend in big batches almost as soon as the results were known. They came from all over Canada, though there were relatively few from the Maritime Provinces. James C. Pope, of Prince Edward Island, whose prospects of office as an Island representative were good, wrote Macdonald, dwelling with pardonable pride on the Conservative capture of five of the Island's six seats.<sup>9</sup> But his letter was exceptional, and most of the communications came from Ontario and Quebec. They usually began with congratulations, but the main interest of the writers was the future Conservative cabinet and their purpose in writing was to make suggestions about its composition.

Some of the suggestions were general in character. One correspondent recalled to Macdonald's attention the considerations

8. Macdonald Papers, V. 79, Dufferin to Macdonald, 5, 7, October, 1878.

9. Ibid., V. 255, J. C. Pope to Macdonald, 23 September, 1878.



which had led in 1867 to the appointment of Edward Kenney, the Nova Scotian Roman Catholic, to the first Dominion cabinet. That appointment, the writer claimed, implied a basic understanding, "that one member of each succeeding ministry should be an English-speaking Catholic."<sup>10</sup> Macdonald hardly needed to be instructed in the political force of this plea; and its exact counter-claim, which probably reached him by the same post -- a pointed reminder of the loyal support which the Orange Order had given the Conservatives during the election -- was also, he knew very well, a consideration which could not be ignored.<sup>11</sup> Alexander Campbell, another probable minister, wrote enclosing a letter from William Miller, a Senator like himself, who had played an extremely important part in the change of sentiment about confederation in the Nova Scotian legislature during the crucial session of 1866. Miller believed that the Conservative group in the Senate should have an adequate representation in the ministry, and Campbell agreed with him. "I think," he wrote, "we should have three in the Senate."<sup>12</sup>

Such recommendations concerned special interests or constitutional conventions. But most of Macdonald's correspondents in the first weeks after the election were more precise. They wrote to support the claims of particular persons for cabinet office. A good many of these letters came from Ontario, a very

10. Ibid., V. 39. Ryan to Macdonald, 20 September, 1878.

11. Ibid., Merrick to Macdonald, 20 September, 1878.

12. Ibid., Campbell to Macdonald, 5 October, 1878.





few from Manitoba. John Schultz suggested that he himself would be a possibility if Macdonald believed that the North-West deserved representation in the cabinet;<sup>13</sup> but most of the letter-writers, sometimes emphasizing their own complete disinterestedness, spoke on behalf of others. The recommendations, for Ontario, were usually far from frivolous. They were made either in favour of previous junior ministers, who had already briefly held office, such as John O'Connor or T. N. Gibbs, or on behalf of promising back-benchers such as Stephenson of Kent, Orton of Centre Wellington, Bowell of North Hastings and Currier of the Ottawa valley.<sup>14</sup> In almost all cases, the letters came from party workers, or officers in constituency associations. The newly elected members themselves remained discreetly silent.

This was by no means true of Quebec. Macdonald received letters from a good many of the leading French-Canadian politicians, including members of the provincial legislature as well as M.P.'s. Langevin, Chapleau, Desjardins, Mousseau, Tarte, Caron, McGreevy and Angers all wrote to him. The great majority of these communications made specific recommendations; and only a few correspondents approached the problem of French Canada's representation in the Federal cabinet in rather more general terms. Chapleau, with the detachment of a man who had somewhat reluctantly decided to remain in provincial politics a while

13. Ibid., Schultz to Macdonald, 21 September, 1878.

14. Ibid., Hayes to Macdonald, 27 September, 1878; Armour to Macdonald, 30 September, 1878; Woods to Macdonald, 21 September, 1878; Griffith to Macdonald, 24 September, 1878; Merrick to Macdonald, 20 September, 1878; Wright to Macdonald, 1 October, 1878.



longer, took the widest view of all. He urged Macdonald not to "forget his Lower Canadian friends", and reminded him that the most popular argument against the Rouges had been "their utmost insignificance in the Mackenzie wigwam."<sup>15</sup> He hoped that the French-speaking ministers would be permitted to retain the portfolios they had held in 1873 -- Militia and Defence, Public Works, with the office of Receiver General, which Chapais and Robitaille had been given, being exchanged for either the Secretaryship of State or the Ministry of Inland Revenue. There would, he was convinced, be intense and jealous competition for the three portfolios. Masson, if he were well enough, would probably get one of the appointments; but three other members from the Montreal District, Baby, Mousseau, and Ouimet, all of whom were roughly equal in parliamentary service and experience, were rivals for one of the remaining places; and Chapleau feared that a terrible "guerre de faction" might result.<sup>16</sup> He urged Macdonald to make his choices quickly, without seeking too much advice from others. "Our French race", he wrote, "can be very easily ruled, if firmness of action is found in the ruler, when sympathy in the governed pre-exists; but it is the most unmanageable nation if you leave them to decide at which altar they shall worship."<sup>17</sup>

Another and quite different factor in French-Canadian

15. Ibid., Chapleau to Macdonald, 19 September, 1878.
16. Archives Publiques de Quebec, Collection Chapais, Chapleau to Langevin, 3 October, 1878.
17. Macdonald Papers, V. 39, Chapleau to Macdonald, 19 September, 1878.





politics, which Chapleau shared yet tried, to some extent, to modify, was its acquisitive and jealous regionalism. The Montreal members were convinced that their District had done emphatically better in the general election than the Quebec District, and that this gave them a far stronger claim in the distribution of patronage. "That brings forth a question", Alphonse Desjardins wrote, "as to the respective claims of both districts to the favourable attention of the leader. The impression here is that Quebec /District has had too often the lion's share in the cabinets -- as elsewhere -- and Montrealers seem as if they were inclined to become jealous of securing their rights. We won't interfere in the choice you will make of the minister from Quebec, but they would be sorry to see an "s" added to that word ... Pardon me for daring to offer you such information."<sup>18</sup> Chapleau did not venture to be so explicit in writing to Macdonald; but in a letter to Langevin he simply assumed that two of the three French-Canadian ministers would be chosen from Montreal District; "après le résultat des deux dernières elections," he wrote, "nous avons droit à cela."<sup>19</sup> Yet, despite this blunt sectional realism, Chapleau never lost sight of the position of French-speaking Quebec as a whole in the federal cabinet. He was aware that a prejudice against Langevin existed among the members from the Montreal District; but he pointed out to them that support for Langevin's claims was the best way of keeping the important portfolio of Public

18. Ibid., Desjardins to Macdonald, 1 October, 1878.

19. Collection Chapais, Chapleau to Langevin, 3 October, 1878.



Works in French-Canadian hands. "De fait, tous comprennent," he wrote, "que le Département des Travaux Publics nous échappe si on ne se range pas tous auprès de vous."<sup>20</sup>

Such concern for French-Canadian interests in general was unusual. Most of the letters from Quebec that reached Macdonald in the first weeks after the election brought recommendations for particular persons. Langevin, Caron, Blanchet, Robitaille and Chapleau were all suggested for the Chieftain's consideration.<sup>21</sup> "I suppose by this time," Mousseau wrote amusingly, "that 'chacun offre son ours' -- that is, everybody wants to be Minister."<sup>22</sup> He himself disclaimed all personal ambitions, but he reported that he and many of his friends considered that Chapleau ought to be given a place in the cabinet.<sup>23</sup> On his part, Chapleau made no particular recommendations for his own, the Montreal District; but he showed a strong interest in Langevin's claims and a deep regret at his defeat in Rimouski. "His election", Chapleau wrote, "would, I believe, have saved you a good deal of trouble in the selection of your Quebec colleagues. I sincerely hope that it will be in your power to arrange matters satisfactorily to him. It is not my right to offer an advice, but I cannot refrain from giving expression to my sentiments of gratitude to him."<sup>24</sup>

20. Ibid.

21. Macdonald Papers, V. 39, Ross to Macdonald, 21 September, 1878; Tourangeau to Macdonald, 23 September, 1878; Robin to Macdonald, 21 September, 1878.

22. Ibid., Mousseau to Macdonald, 12 October, 1878.

23. Ibid.

24. Ibid., Chapleau to Macdonald, 19 September, 1878.



There were others beside Chapleau who strongly favoured Langevin. Langevin's claims, in fact, received extremely impressive and perhaps organized support. He and his friends obviously suspected that his failure in the election might have weakened his political influence and reduced his own chances of appointment. Earnestly they set about the work of rehabilitation. More than a dozen people, including Chapleau, Caron, Tarte and McGreevy, wrote to Macdonald strongly emphasizing Langevin's credentials.<sup>25</sup> Langevin himself had written, no doubt in some anxiety and trepidation, on September the 18th, the day after the election. His tone was humble but hopeful. "I need not tell you that I am at your disposal", he wrote, "You know we have fought together. I am ready to do the same again. If you want me as your colleague in the Commons, I shall have to find a seat there. If you think that I should go to the Senate to be there your Quebec mouthpiece, well, say so, and I will give up the House of Commons altogether."<sup>26</sup>

But even this did not exhaust the list of possible French-Canadian cabinet ministers. One name, though it was occasionally mentioned in significant connections, was never directly recommended for office. The importance of the personage who bore it was simply taken for granted. This was Louis François Rodrique Masson, an immensely popular man, who had been the member for

25. These letters are all in Macdonald Papers, V. 39.

26. Macdonald Papers, V. 39, Langevin to Macdonald, 18 September, 1878.





Terrebonne since 1867, and who had been re-elected in 1878 by a majority larger than any other in the Province of Quebec. An established member of Macdonald's "Old Guard", Masson had played an increasingly important role in the third Parliament. During its first two sessions, when Langevin was away, he had succeeded in consolidating his position. Langevin, after his return, was undoubtedly a more frequent speaker than Masson; but Masson took part in a good many debates, speaking on a fairly wide range of subjects, and more often than any other French-Canadian member, excepting Langevin. By 1878 he was evidently regarded by the members from the Montreal District as their leader. In 1877, when John A. Macdonald had come for a brief speaking tour to the Province of Quebec, Masson, along with Chapleau, Langevin, and Thomas White of the Montreal Gazette accompanied him on his travels.<sup>27</sup>

Yet, despite his abilities and his advantages, Masson was not in future to have a particularly active political career. There were other important interests in his life. Chapleau's parents had been poor, but the Massons of Terrebonne were rich, and Louis François Rodrique enjoyed the leisured contentment of country life. His health, moreover, was not particularly good, and his political activities were occasionally interrupted by bouts of illness. Early in June, 1878, he had written Macdonald complaining of mysterious aches and pains

27. Creighton, John A. Macdonald, the Old Chieftain, p. 233.



which the hot weather seemed to aggravate;<sup>28</sup> and though the general election was now imminent he had sailed for France for a change of scene and medical advice and treatment. His triumphant election in Terrebonne apparently did not move him either to hurry back home or to communicate with Macdonald; and it was Macdonald who had to get in touch with Masson through Masson's Montreal friends. On the last day of September, Desjardins telegraphed Macdonald that Masson would leave for home by the first boat from Le Havre to New York.<sup>29</sup> Both Desjardins and Chapleau apparently assumed that Masson was to be consulted about possible French-Canadian appointments to the cabinet -- particularly those from the District of Montreal. Chapleau, seeking to excuse himself for suggesting the portfolios to be given French-speaking ministers, informed Macdonald that he had talked these suggestions over with Masson before he left for Europe and that Masson had agreed.<sup>30</sup> "But on the whole," Desjardins wrote to Macdonald, "I am satisfied that what you will decide towards Montreal, with Masson's concurrence, will be cheerfully accepted by the party here."<sup>31</sup>

Up until the end of the first week in October, when Macdonald left Toronto for Montreal, French-speaking politicians of real prominence had made very little attempt to exert any important influence on the formation of the new Conservative cabinet.

28. Macdonald Papers, V. 229, Masson to Macdonald, 6 June, 1878.

29. Ibid., V. 39, Desjardins to Macdonald, 1 October, 1878.

30. Ibid., Chapleau to Macdonald, 19 September, 1878.

31. Ibid., Desjardins to Macdonald, 1 October, 1878.





There was no acknowledged "chef" of the party in Quebec; in all probability, Chapleau, Masson, and Langevin would have been accepted as the three principal leaders. Masson had not tried to get in touch with Macdonald; Chapleau and Langevin had both written, but in a modest, deferential fashion, restricting their suggestions within very narrow limits. Langevin had humbly offered himself in whatever political capacity he might be most useful. Chapleau had supported Langevin's claims and, somewhat apologetically, had ventured to give some general recommendations about the portfolios to be offered French-Canadians. No one had felt justified in giving detailed advice; nor had Macdonald invited it. When he left for Montreal, nothing concerning the French-Canadian representation in the cabinet, had apparently been decided.

### III Cabinet-Making from October 8 to November 8

On the afternoon of Tuesday, the 8th of October, the Governor General left Ottawa by the North Shore Railway and that evening reached Montreal.<sup>32</sup> Macdonald arrived in the city from Toronto the following morning and put up at the Windsor Hotel, where for the next few days the business of cabinet-making was carried forward in a series of confidential talks and interviews.<sup>33</sup> At half-past one o'clock on Wednesday afternoon he met Dufferin, according to appointment, and was formally invited to form the new government. "He was very gushing", Macdonald reported to

32. Gazette (Montreal), 9 October, 1878.

33. Ibid., 10 October, 1878.



Tupper, "and said that on personal grounds the warmest wish of his heart was gratified by his having the opportunity of charging me with the formation of a ministry."<sup>34</sup> For some time he discussed Conservative policies with the interested and curious Governor General; the talk ranged widely over the proposed new tariff, defence, and the Canadian Pacific Railway, and Macdonald was suitably guarded in his replies.<sup>35</sup> He was even more tentative and non-committal about his ministry. "I told him", he informed Tupper, "my cabinet was not cut and dry and would not be till Wednesday when Masson was expected."<sup>36</sup> Wednesday was, of course, the following Wednesday, the 16th of October, by which time, Macdonald had learnt in Montreal, it was hoped that Masson would be back.

Macdonald's laconic statement to Dufferin might have seemed to imply that the making of the cabinet as a whole would have to be postponed until Masson's return. But this, of course, was not the fact. A good many appointments had already been decided or nearly decided; and it was chiefly the French-speaking part of the representation from Quebec that still rested in suspense. During that first day at the Windsor Hotel, Macdonald was extremely busy taking soundings of informed opinion in the Montreal District. "I have seen most of the Montreal Conservative M.P.'s, Desjardins, Baby, Ouimet, Mousseau, etc. etc.", he

34. Public Archives of Canada, Tupper Papers, V. 4, Macdonald to Tupper, 9 October, 1878.

35. St. Aldwyn Papers, P.C.C. 92, Dufferin to Hicks Beach, 12 October, 1878.

36. Tupper Papers, V. 4, Macdonald to Tupper, 9 October, 1878.



reported later in the day to Tupper.<sup>37</sup> Sectional feeling in the District, he discovered, was strong and somewhat vindictive in character. The M.P.'s from the Montreal District were apparently inclined to assume that Langevin's defeat in Rimouski pretty effectively disposed of his chances of a cabinet post. Chapleau, despite his efforts, had not entirely succeeded in mollifying their anti-Langevin prejudices. "They are against Langevin," Macdonald informed Tupper.<sup>38</sup> Yet, with Masson still absent, even this unanimity was not quite enough. He would have to wait to make up his mind about French Canada.

In the meantime, the cabinet as a whole was rapidly taking shape. On that same busy Wednesday, Macdonald dispatched three important telegrams to the Maritime Provinces.<sup>39</sup> Tilley, J. C. Pope of Prince Edward Island, and James McDonald of Pictou, Nova Scotia were all invited to accept portfolios and to join Macdonald in Ottawa immediately. These three, together with Tupper whose appointment had already been decided upon, would make up the Maritime division of the cabinet, as Macdonald had planned it at that time. As he said later in explanation, the very poor showing which New Brunswick had made in the general election was bound to weigh heavily with him; and although he did not want to disappoint Tilley or deprive the Province of any of its old position and influence, he did not see how he could justify the appointment of two New Brunswick

37. Ibid.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.





ministers.<sup>40</sup>

Macdonald had predicted accurately when he told Tupper that Tilley, McDonald and J. C. Pope would probably take a couple of days to reach Montreal. By Friday, October 11th, they were beginning to arrive; and, along with them, other significant personages were observed to have come to town. Senator D. L. Macpherson of Toronto and T. N. Gibbs, the defeated candidate in the South Ontario election had both appeared; and what was perhaps more surprising James Domville, the member for King's County had made the long journey up from New Brunswick, probably in Tilley's company,<sup>41</sup> Gibbs, though he would have to find another seat, was a cabinet possibility; and Macpherson's presence in Montreal may have suggested a lingering uncertainty in Macdonald's mind about the senatorial representation in the cabinet. To Domville he had offered nothing -- a nothing, at any rate, that he had mentioned to his chief confidant, Tupper; and in all probability Domville had come, at Tilley's instigation, to lend his aid in the final struggle to win for New Brunswick an adequate place in the national executive. An able man, an active member and fairly frequent speaker in the third Parliament, Domville had held his seat in the general election; and, in place of the defeated Mitchell, he was probably the best support that Tilley could have brought with him.

The rendez-vous for the week-end was Ottawa. Tupper reached the capital from Toronto on Friday morning, the 11th of October.

40. Ibid., V. 524, Macdonald to Wilmot, 23 October, 1878.

41. Globe (Toronto), 12 October, 1878.



Macdonald came up from Montreal on the same day by the afternoon train, and Tilley and James McDonald were expected that evening.<sup>42</sup> J. C. Pope, of Prince Edward Island, arrived in Ottawa before the week-end was over; and it is possible that another Pope, J. H. Pope, the member for Compton in Quebec, who had been Minister of Agriculture in the previous Conservative government, was also called to the capital for the meeting. It was a gathering, as time was soon to show, of ministers-designate, at which final decisions may have been provisionally reached about the cabinet as a whole; and it was significant both in respect of those who were there and those who were not. Evidently no French-Canadian had been invited to the week-end conclave. Masson was half-way across the Atlantic; Langevin was apparently still in Quebec; Chapleau had remained behind in Montreal.

When the week-end was over, everybody was again on the move. Lord Dufferin left Ottawa on the stately progress which was to take him to Quebec, where his transatlantic journey was to begin on Saturday, the 19th of October.<sup>43</sup> His ministers-designate returned to Montreal from the capital on Monday afternoon, the 14th; and there, in the Windsor Hotel, a formidable gathering of the high command of the Conservative party assembled during the next two days.<sup>44</sup> There were five Maritimers -- Pope of Prince Edward Island, Tupper and McDonald of Nova Scotia, and Tilley and Domville of New Brunswick. From

42. Ibid.

43. La Minerve (Montreal), 16 October, 1878.

44. Ibid., 16 October, 1878; Globe, 16 October, 1878.





Ontario came Macpherson, J. C. Aikins, John O'Connor, Mackenzie  
Bowell, and, of course, Sir John Macdonald himself. Quebec was  
represented by Chapleau, Robitaille, McGreevy, and J. H. Pope  
of Compton. It was a significant gathering, which bore a fairly  
close resemblance to the cabinet, soon to be announced; but while  
a number of future ministers were present, there were also --  
if the newspaper correspondents are to be trusted -- some important  
absentees. Langevin had not come, though McGreevy may have been  
acting as the representative of his interests. Alexander Campbell  
was not there, but then he had been unwell recently.

By Thursday, the 17th of October, time was running very  
short. In two days, the Governor General would be sailing from  
Quebec; and, from every point of view, it was essential that  
the ministers should be sworn in before his departure. But  
Masson had not reached New York and there was no certain news  
of the time of his arrival. Lord Dufferin had planned to  
leave Montreal for Quebec on Thursday night, and by the after-  
noon of that day Macdonald evidently felt he could wait no  
longer. At three o'clock, six ministers took the oaths of  
office; Sir John Macdonald was sworn in as Prime Minister and  
Minister of the Interior, S. L. Tilley as Minister of Finance,  
Charles Tupper as Minister of Public Works, J. H. Pope as Minister  
of Agriculture, John O'Connor as President of the Council, and  
James McDonald as Minister of Justice.<sup>45</sup> It was an incomplete  
list, not more than half the cabinet at the most; and it  
was vulnerable to the criticisms of opposition newspapers on

45. Gazette, 18 October, 1878; Globe, 18 October, 1878.



account both of its deficiencies and of the long delay that had preceded its publication.

It was the work of the Conservative press to answer these criticisms, to explain the delay, and to extol the new ministry. The Montreal newspapers -- and particularly La Minerve and the Gazette -- were peculiarly fitted for this task. La Minerve, which had been regarded as the mouthpiece of Sir George Cartier, was a faithful defender of Conservative causes; and Tom White, the proprietor and editor of the Gazette, was a confidential and fairly frequent correspondent of Macdonald's. These two newspapers were on the spot; their reporters were not unwelcome at the Windsor Hotel; their editors had occasional access to special information. On Friday, the 18th of October they both gave extensive news coverage and editorial comment to the new cabinet; and not very surprisingly the resemblance between their respective explanations and observations was remarkably close. The readers of both papers were informed that Macdonald had wished to consult Masson about the Quebec portion of the cabinet ("la section Canadienne-française de la Province de Québec" was La Minerve's more precise definition) and since Masson could not yet be consulted, only a part of the cabinet had been sworn in.<sup>46</sup> "The position which Mr. Masson occupies in the party entitles him not only to a seat in the cabinet", the Montreal Gazette explained, "but to be consulted in relation to the personnel of the Quebec portion of it; and in consideration of this fact, Sir John Macdonald postponed until the last

46. La Minerve, 18 October, 1878.



moment, the final arrangements of his cabinet, even those portions of it belonging to the other Provinces."<sup>47</sup>

The three French-Canadian ministers could not be sworn in until Masson arrived. But these were not the only cabinet posts remaining to be filled. Four or five ministers -- at least one from the Maritime Provinces and no fewer than three from Ontario -- were still to be appointed. Nobody assumed that Masson's concurrence was necessary or desirable for these appointments; and there were other substantial reasons for the delay in making them. Macdonald had evidently not yet decided what Senators were to be made ministers, and the problem of New Brunswick's representation in the cabinet was still unsolved. Macpherson and J. C. Aikins, both Senators, were present in Montreal. Alexander Campbell, who had not come to the meeting, was also a Senator and had been a member of the first Conservative administration; but Macdonald was aware that there was some<sup>48</sup> opposition to his reappointment.

Moreover, the problem of senatorial representation was complicated by the urgent demands of New Brunswick for a second portfolio. To a newspaper man of the period, the appearance of James Domville in Montreal was eloquent evidence of the strength and persistence with which Tilley was arguing his Province's case. The Globe of Toronto was, of course, only too ready to invent divisions in the Conservative counsels, and to attribute the delay in the formation of the cabinet to

47. Gazette, 18 October, 1878.

48. Macdonald Papers, V. 39, two letters opposing Campbell's appointment.





these internal disputes; but it was probably fairly close to the truth when it reported that Tilley had been pressing hard for the appointment of Domville as a second New Brunswick minister.<sup>49</sup> This, as the event proved, Macdonald was not willing to concede; but by Thursday he had apparently realized that some kind of compromise would have to be made to satisfy the unfortunate New Brunswick. In its issue of the 18th of October, in which the first six ministers were listed, the Montreal Gazette announced that it was "understood" that the Senator R. D. Wilmot of New Brunswick would be offered the speakership of the Senate and a seat, without portfolio, in the cabinet.<sup>50</sup> If this concession was made in fact, it would fill one of the three places which were all that even Campbell and Miller had argued should be allotted to the Senate in the ministry; and this would mean that one of the three possible Ontario candidates -- Macpherson, Campbell, and Aikins -- would have to be dropped.

On Friday, the 18th of October, Masson arrived in New York.<sup>51</sup> He could not possibly reach Quebec before Saturday morning; and this might be too late to permit Dufferin to officiate at the swearing-in of the remaining ministers. The Governor General spent Friday in laying the foundation stones of Dufferin Terrace and the new Kent Gate and in delivering gracious farewells<sup>52</sup> to the citizens of Quebec City. He was expected to sail for England on Saturday morning; and on Friday Macdonald hurried down to Quebec in order to be present at the Governor General's

49. Globe, 18 October, 1878.

50. Gazette, 18 October, 1878.

51. La Minerve, 19 October, 1878.

52. Gazette, 19 October, 1878.



departure and in the hope that he might be able to swear in the last ministers before he left. Mackenzie Bowell, J. C. Aikins and J. C. Pope of Prince Edward Island also travelled to Quebec in Macdonald's company; and that evening, when the new Prime Minister spoke to the Club Cartier in Quebec City, Langevin and Chapleau were both on the platform.<sup>53</sup>

By this time, the business of cabinet-making was evidently nearly complete. The names of Macdonald's fellow travellers to Quebec left little doubt about several of the last appointments. It was true that in addition to Bowell and Aikins, a fifth minister would have to be selected for Ontario; and, most important of all, Macdonald and Masson would have to allot the three French-Canadian portfolios. But, in actual fact, only a part of this most formidable problem still remained to be solved. Masson himself had been a certainty from the beginning; and if, as seemed only right, at least one post was to be granted to the Quebec District, Langevin could not be passed over without grave difficulty. Masson was still anxiously awaited; but his coming would probably not result in many surprises.

Masson finally arrived in Quebec in the early afternoon of Saturday. By that time Lord Dufferin had already set out on his journey to England, and Sir Patrick MacDougall, the Commander of the Forces, was about to be sworn in as Administrator of the Dominion, pending the arrival of Lord Lorne, the new Governor General. Sir Patrick's initial act of state was to





officiate while the second batch of new ministers took the oath of office. J. C. Pope was sworn in as Minister of Fisheries, Langevin as Postmaster General, Masson as Minister of Militia and Defence, Mackenzie Bowell as Minister of Customs, and James Cox Aikins as Secretary of State.<sup>54</sup>

When Macdonald and his new associates returned to Montreal on Sunday morning, the 20th of October, only two important decisions remained to be taken. A fifth minister would have to be chosen for Ontario and a fourth for the Province of Quebec. For Quebec, Macdonald's and Masson's first choice was Joseph Adolphe Chapleau; and they evidently considered their preference so important that it was made public on Monday, along with the names of the new ministers. Both the Montreal Gazette and La Minerve announced that Chapleau had been offered and had been obliged to decline the fourth Quebec portfolio, the Gazette adding that it was the Ministry of Internal Revenue.<sup>55</sup> Both papers moreover took care to explain his decision and to praise him for his self-sacrifice. Chapleau, they informed their readers, felt an obligation to retain his post as leader of the opposition in the Quebec legislature. Chapleau, La Minerve declared, would remain "pour finir la tache commencée à Québec et renverser le gouvernement Joly."<sup>56</sup>

There can be little doubt that this was the true reason for Chapleau's refusal. His entire political career had so far been spent in the Quebec provincial legislature; and there he was engaged in a struggle for the recovery of political power --

54. Gazette, 21 October, 1878.

55. Ibid.

56. La Minerve, 21 October, 1878.



a struggle which he was convinced was bound to end successfully, but which was not yet over. Early in March 1878, the new Liberal Lieutenant-Governor of Quebec, Luc Letellier de St. Just, had abruptly dismissed his Conservative ministry, headed by de Boucherville, on the grounds of its deliberate and contemptuous neglect of his office. Chapleau had been Provincial Secretary in the de Boucherville administration; and when the new Liberal Premier, Henri Joly de Lotbinière, dissolved the legislature, and called an election for the 1st of May, Chapleau vigorously led the Conservative attack throughout the Province. A virtual draw was the unfortunate result of the election; and in the next session of the Legislative Assembly, where the Liberals often survived by only one vote, Chapleau was again in the thick of the fight. In June, he repeatedly wrote and telegraphed to Macdonald, excitedly giving him the details of the struggle, and requesting his advice.<sup>57</sup> Yet, despite all his efforts, the Liberals were still clinging to power when the short session ended.

Chapleau felt that it would be impossible for him to leave for Ottawa at this crucial moment. He must stay in Quebec and finish his work. Other French-Canadian politicians were only too ready to agree that he should perform this act of self-sacrifice for the good of the party. "Chapleau nous ferait du mal à Quebec en nous laissant," wrote Israel Tarte;<sup>58</sup>

57. Macdonald Papers, V. 204, Chapleau to Macdonald, 5, 12, 16, June, 1878.

58. Ibid., V. 39, Tarte to Houde, 17 October, 1878.



and Chapleau himself reported wryly to Langevin that several ambitious Montreal District members had assured him there would be no recriminations if he accepted a federal portfolio but that this would unfortunately cut short the brilliant career he was certain to have in provincial politics.<sup>59</sup> Yet Chapleau declined Macdonald's invitation somewhat reluctantly; and he took pains to get as much credit as he could out of his refusal. Two years later, in October, 1880, when Macdonald made another of his frequent attempts to persuade him to enter the federal cabinet, Chapleau still declined on the ground that the rehabilitation of the Conservative party in Quebec was not yet complete, though by this time he was back in office as Premier. "This is the third time", he wrote to Macdonald on that occasion, "I put my individual interests after the good of the party ..."<sup>60</sup> The first time was in October 1878.

Once Chapleau had definitely decided to decline, the remaining posts in the cabinet were quickly filled. On Masson's suggestion Macdonald invited Louis François Georges Baby, an M.P. from the Montreal District, to become the third French-Canadian minister. He had a brief interview with Baby on the Sunday, the 20th of October and offered him the portfolio of Inland Revenue.<sup>61</sup> On the same day, or possibly on Monday, he made up his mind about the fifth Ontario post and asked his

59. Collection Chapais, Chapleau to Langevin, 3 October, 1878.

60. Macdonald Papers, V. 204, Chapleau to Macdonald, 31 October, 1880.

61. Ibid., V. 188, Baby to Macdonald, 22 October, 1878.





old friend and partner Alexander Campbell to accept the virtual sinecure of the Receiver-General's office, with the promise of the Postmaster Generalship in the near future.<sup>62</sup> The second appointment from New Brunswick was the last to be settled. Tilley telegraphed in advance to R. D. Wilmot, warning him of the impending invitation; and on Wednesday, October 23rd, Macdonald wrote offering him the Speakership in the Senate, and a seat, without portfolio, in the cabinet and, at the same time, asking him if he would be interested in the Lieutenant-Governorship of New Brunswick, when that office was again vacant.<sup>63</sup> He took pains to point out to Wilmot that his offer was a compromise between New Brunswick's previous standing in the cabinet and its very poor showing in the general election.

Baby was sworn in on the 26th of October, Campbell and Wilmot on the 8th of November. The cabinet of 1878 was complete.

#### IV Conclusions

It is perfectly clear that in 1878 not one of his French-Canadian colleagues had been singled out by Macdonald as his principal lieutenant with a special influence in the making of the cabinet as a whole. The Montreal newspapers complimented Masson as Sir George Cartier's successor; but it was Cartier's "mantle, as leader of the Province of Quebec" which, the Gazette claimed, had "fallen upon the member for Terrebonne."<sup>64</sup> In

62. Ibid., V. 195, Campbell to Macdonald, 23 October, 1878.

63. Ibid., V. 524, Macdonald to Wilmot, 23 October, 1878.

64. Gazette, 21 October, 1878.



fact, as the event was to prove, Masson had neither the ability nor the ambition to achieve Cartier's ascendancy; and even in the autumn of 1878, when everybody waited for him so anxiously, his importance was more apparent than real. The circumstances of September and October, 1878 gave a specious enhancement to the value of his political advice. His absence in France, his hurried recall, the postponement of half the ministerial appointments until his return, and his frantic race against time to Quebec City all helped to put Masson in the news and to lend him a special dramatic interest.

But that was nearly all. Masson's prominence in the newspapers was no real indication of his political importance. His presence and his concurrence were politically important to Macdonald; but he arrived only in time to agree to a set of decisions which was already nearly complete. There were strict limits, moreover, to the matters for which his approval was asked. Nobody, not even Masson's most fervent newspaper admirers, ever imagined that he would have anything to say about the cabinet appointments from Ontario or any of the Maritime Provinces; and it was evidently regarded as proper and unexceptionable that the fourth, English-speaking portfolio for the Province of Quebec should have been given to J. H. Pope, two days before Masson returned home. Masson's influence, in fact, extended only so far as the three French-Canadian appointments; and in the light of Macdonald's known interest in Chapleau, and Langevin's acknowledged prominence in the Quebec District, that influence was largely confirmatory in





character. Baby's appointment was certainly made at Masson's suggestion; but Baby, a junior minister, was only one in a cabinet of fourteen. Macdonald's principal lieutenant and chief confidant in the making of the cabinet of 1878 was not Louis François Rodrique Masson but Charles Tupper.

In addition to Masson, a number of other French-Canadian leaders were asked by Macdonald for their opinions on French-Canadian representation in the cabinet. There is almost no evidence that he sent out any written requests for advice; with one possible exception, the numerous letters he received from Quebec were clearly not written in reply to communications of his. He was notoriously wary of the written record on such confidential matters; but discussion was a different matter and once he reached Quebec Province on the 9th of October, he began to talk freely with federal and some provincial politicians. He told Tupper that he had seen and talked to most of the Conservative M.P.'s from the Montreal District; and when he reached Quebec he doubtless had interviews with Langevin, Caron and others. On their part, the French-Canadian leaders were eager to offer advice in person; and long before the new Prime Minister arrived in their Province they had been volunteering suggestions through the post.

Their counsel, in its written form, was concerned exclusively with French-Canadian representation in the cabinet; and although proof is, of course, lacking it is very likely that their spoken suggestions were limited in exactly the same way. They had nothing whatever to say about the organization of the cabinet as a whole or the regional distribution of its various portfolios.



They showed no concern about the representatives from other provinces, or other groups and interests, whether racial or religious. They did not venture to offer any advice about the fourth Quebec appointment, the representative of the Province's English-speaking minority. Their attention was concentrated upon a single subject -- French-Canadian representation from the Province of Quebec. But they were far from speaking with a united voice. There was a marked and somewhat jealous division of opinion between the District of Montreal and the District of Quebec. A number of Macdonald's French-Canadian correspondents wrote to support possible representatives from their own districts; most of the letters of recommendation were in favour of a single individual. The sense of regional identity was so strong that few people appeared to be thinking seriously of French Canada's representation as a whole.

Of all Macdonald's French-Canadian advisers, Chapleau was the only one who showed much interest in the portfolios which were to be given to French-Canadian cabinet ministers. He talked the matter over with Masson, and Masson agreed with his views; but the member for Terrebonne did not apparently take the trouble to write to Macdonald on the subject. All that Chapleau had ventured to ask was that the three portfolios which the French-speaking ministers had held in 1873 should be given to them again, with the possible substitution of the State Secretaryship or the Ministry of Inland Revenue for the Receiver-Generalship. Not all Chapleau's wishes were granted. Masson was made Minister of Militia and Defence. The Receiver-





Generalship, which was assigned briefly to Alexander Campbell, was soon to be absorbed in the Ministry of Finance; and in its place, Baby was given the Ministry of Inland Revenue, as Chapleau had requested. The Department of Public Works, which had been Langevin's before the resignation of 1873, was not immediately restored to him. Instead he was temporarily made Postmaster General; and Public Works was assigned to Charles Tupper, the caustic critic of Liberal railway policy during the third Parliament. Public Works was a big-spending, an important Department; and in the light of Macdonald's ambitious plans for western expansion and transcontinental railway building, it was certain to become more important still. Its scope, in fact, was now too large for one department; and Macdonald was probably already planning the creation of the new Department of Railways and Canals, and the consequent reorganization of the Cabinet, which took place in the spring of 1879. Tupper, as was to be expected, became the first Minister of Railways and Canals; and Public Works, shorn of some of its new consequences, was given back to Langevin.

The idea that the political importance of a particular portfolio, for French Canadians, is to be judged by its relevance "to the distinctive ethnic and cultural interests of French Canadians" is a modern notion which might have puzzled the Fathers of Confederation and their immediate successors, and with which they almost certainly would have disagreed. Cartier, in his speech in the Canadian Legislature in 1865, had emphasized the fact that the powers of the federal Parliament





comprehended "these large questions of general interest in which the differences of race or religion had no place".<sup>65</sup> Defence, tariffs, excise, public works, he declared "absorbed all individual interest"; these matters touched all, concerned all, and could, presumably, be administered by members of all "races", English, Scotch, Irish and French. Though the three French-Canadian ministers formed less than a quarter of the cabinet at any one time, they had, in the eleven years since Confederation, held about two-thirds of the portfolios of government. With the exception of five departments, Finance, Customs, the Interior and Fisheries -- and the short-lived office of Secretary of State for the Provinces, which had been abolished in 1873 -- they had occupied every one of the thirteen or fourteen posts in the federal administration.

The Department of Fisheries had been reserved for Maritimers; and the great prestige of such people as Galt, Hincks and Tilley had so far ensured that Finance had been kept in English-speaking hands. It may have been assumed, through experience or prejudice, that English or Scotch financiers were better than French; but if such an understanding existed, it had never been systematically implemented through the whole range of departments concerned with financial matters and economic developments. The office of Receiver General and the ministries of Inland Revenue and Agriculture had all been occupied by French Canadians. Finally,

65. Province of Canada, Parliamentary Debates on the Subject of Confederation (Quebec, 1865), p. 61.



if only a few portfolios had been held exclusively by English-speaking Canadians, none had so far been held exclusively by French-speaking Canadians.

Militia and Defence had undoubtedly been a department of considerable consequence during the period of the American Civil War and the Fenian Raids; but since the Treaty of Washington of 1871 and the withdrawal of the imperial garrisons, its importance had been declining. The scare of war with Russia earlier in 1878 may have slightly revived popular interest in the office; and it still carried some prestige, perhaps more in Quebec than in the other provinces. The Montreal newspapers, at any rate, made much of the fact that Masson had succeeded to the portfolio which the great Cartier had held in 1873. The Department of Inland Revenue, the counterpart of Customs, was an improvement on the Receiver-Generalship, which was soon to be eliminated as a separate office; but Langevin's temporary assignment, the post-office, was a definite come-down from his former portfolio. None of these departments was particularly concerned with any important political or economic development of the near future, and none earned, or spent, a great deal of money. They were not departments that brought their ministers any very great influence in the cabinet.

The distribution of portfolios, first determined by Sir John Macdonald in 1867, had been altered only as a result of Prince Edward Island's entrance into Confederation; and no further change was made in 1878. Cartier had secured three places for French Canadians out of the four granted to the





Province of Quebec; this was less than a quarter of the first Macdonald cabinet, and with fourteen members in the cabinet of 1878, it was not much more than a fifth of the whole. But there was no apparent dissatisfaction with this share in 1878; and French-Canadian leaders in Quebec made no attempt to increase the number of their representatives in the cabinet, or to alter the representation of English-speaking Quebec, or to effect any change whatever in the number and distribution of the cabinet seats, by provinces, throughout Canada as a whole. There was, however, a regional rearrangement of the French-Canadian portfolios, with the District of Montreal now contributing two of the three representatives. This shift was claimed and justified on the ground of Montreal's comparatively greater success in the general election. Macdonald used exactly the same argument in reverse when he insisted that New Brunswick's poor electoral results did not merit the second portfolio which Tilley requested. New Brunswick was, in fact, the only Province that showed discontent with its share in the new government; and in the end, after some dispute, it was given two seats in the cabinet, but only one portfolio.

Six of the ministers appointed in 1878 -- Bowell, Masson, Baby, Wilmot, McDonald, and J. C. Pope -- had never held cabinet office before. There is little direct evidence to explain why these, rather than others, were chosen. Ability, popularity, political influence and authority were no doubt factors in each case; and in addition each of the new ministers possessed some special and fairly obvious advantage which helped



to distinguish him from possible rivals. Bowell represented an important Ontario interest, the Orange Order; J. C. Pope was the obvious choice in a very small Prince Edward Island field; Wilnot was a Senator and would therefore not have to run the risk of re-election in New Brunswick; McDonald was a man of whose abilities Macdonald thought highly. Masson, who, like Laurier, spoke English with ease and fluency, was apparently well liked by his English-speaking colleagues including Macdonald; but the real explanation of the part he played in the formation of the cabinet of 1878 is to be found in his political popularity and prominence in the Montreal District. Why he and Macdonald preferred Baby to Mousseau, Ouimet and Desjardins is a puzzle on which the documents throw no light.

During the formation of the cabinet of 1878, no political leader, whether English-speaking or French-speaking, made any attempt to reach an agreement with Macdonald on any public issue or sought to obtain a commitment from him respecting government policy or future legislation. The Liberal-Conservative party was already committed to an ambitious programme of nation-building through immigration, western settlement, and trans-continental transport; and to this there had been added, in 1876, a qualified adoption of protection in commercial policy. In 1878, Conservatives could be suitably vague about the degree of protection which they would impose; but they could not retreat from the principle of tariff adjustment in the interests of Canadian industry. With good reason Tilley feared the



results of this policy in New Brunswick; but though he tried, in his speeches, to "deal gingerly" with certain of its aspects, he could and did make no attempt to alter it.<sup>66</sup>

In both Quebec and Ontario, the Conservative programme was generally popular; and the only contemporary issue, on which French-speaking leaders might have attempted to make bargains with Macdonald before accepting office was, of course, the Letellier affair. Letellier's dismissal of the de Boucherville government had outraged and infuriated Quebec Conservatives. With fanatical determination they kept insisting that their Lieutenant-Governor had committed an unpardonable constitutional crime and that its only appropriate punishment was his own expulsion from office. During the late autumn and winter of 1878-79, by means of petitions, private letters, and deputations, they urged Letellier's political execution upon Prime Minister Macdonald. Here, obviously, was a burning issue on which prospective French Canadian ministers might conceivably have tried to obtain a commitment from Macdonald during the formation of the cabinet. There is not the slightest evidence that they did so. In the twenty-odd letters from French Canadians which Macdonald received in the first weeks after the election, the Letellier affair was not even mentioned. It was not before, but after, the making of the new cabinet, that Quebec Conservatives began to exert real pressure for the dismissal of Letellier; and it was months later that a

66. Macdonald Papers, V. 276, Tilley to Macdonald, 26 July, 1878.





reluctant Macdonald and a still more reluctant Governor General yielded to their entreaties.



## CHAPTER 3

### The Cabinet of 1896

By John T. Saywell

The triumph of the Liberal Party in 1896 is one of the major events in the evolution of Canadian political parties. The structure of the cabinet formed by Wilfrid Laurier was in many ways tangible proof of the revolution that had occurred in Canadian politics and the Liberal party. The elements in that revolution were a French and Catholic Prime Minister with solid backing in English and French Canada; the emergence of the Laurier-led Liberals as the moderate party in Quebec; the adoption by the Liberals of a commercial and financial policy similar to that of their opponents; and the support of the party by provincial premiers frankly hostile to centralization. These were the factors that dictated the structure of the cabinet that emerged. Most of the decisions had been made, however, before the election when Laurier was trying to put together a winning combination and when he was in a weaker position than on June 24, 1896.

#### I The Paramountcy of Laurier Within the Liberal Party

By 1896 Laurier had emerged as the national Liberal leader. Early in his career he had established a favorable image in English Canada. But his election to the leadership in 1887 was not taken as permanent by many English Canadians





who either aspired for the return of Blake or assumed that some English Canadian, such as David Mills, would gradually emerge as the long-term leader. Many Liberals felt that to enable the party to overcome the decisive Tory majorities in Quebec, however, a French-Canadian leader was essential for a short term at least. It is, however, one of the remarkable aspects of Laurier's career that, although racial and religious questions dominated Canadian politics from 1887 to 1896, he was able to consolidate his position and, with the help of a disintegrating Conservative party, gather strength in all parts of the country. By 1896 he was not the leader of the Quebec wing of the party, who might be primus inter pares, but needing an English co-premier; he was in most eyes the unquestioned national leader of a national party.

Had there been a leader of the English-Canadian or even the Ontario wing of the Liberal party, Laurier's course might have been different. But as Laurier knew and John Willison made clear in a letter of December 29, 1895, there was no such person in the federal field. The most obvious candidates from Ontario were Sir Richard Cartwright, R. W. Scott, David Mills, John Charlton and James D. Edgar. In time each of these men received substantial positions within the party, the first three entering the cabinet and Edgar becoming Speaker of the House. But each had very serious shortcomings; none could be a candidate for the position of co-premier or the leading English-speaking Canadian. In the Maritimes



the most prominent and influential Liberal was L. H. Davies. Laurier and Davies were close, and in the days before the election Laurier appears to have relied heavily on his advice. Davies was the negotiator, if not the instrument, in securing commitments from A. G. Blair and W. S. Fielding to enter the federal arena. He was also fully informed of Laurier's dealings in Ontario for he was informed the instant Sir Oliver Mowat had agreed to join Laurier in May. But while Davies was clearly the pre-election Maritime leader, Laurier had been in constant communication with Fielding, particularly since the 1893 convention when the latter had made such an impression, and doubtless looked to him as much as to Davies in 1896 as a Maritime spokesman. Neither man, however, was regarded by the public or the party as a co-premier.

Quite clearly the accession of Sir Oliver Mowat was intended to give the public impression that he was to Laurier as Cartier had been to Macdonald. Laurier was desperately anxious that Mowat should enter the electoral campaign and join the cabinet. The early negotiations seem to have been carried on in a triangular correspondence between John Ewart, Mowat and Laurier. Laurier had suggested to Ewart in the spring that Mowat should enter federal politics but the Ontario Premier apparently raised both personal and political objections, the latter being the school question and trade policy. Ewart suggested to Laurier that Mowat be offered the Prime Ministership and be permitted to bring some of his Ontario colleagues into the cabinet with him. On April 20



Laurier replied:

"That it would be a pleasure to me to make any sacrifice in order to induce Sir Oliver to enter federal politics. (1) The question of premiership can be easily settled, I would most gladly make way for Sir Oliver. (2) The financial question can also be easily settled, for a syndicate of capitalists, at the head of which are George Cox and F. H. James, two of the most wealthy men of Toronto, as you know, is ready to guarantee him an annuity for the rest of his life."

Laurier demurred at the inclusion of members of the Ontario cabinet on the understandable grounds that it would cause resentment among the party. Ewart passed on the information to Mowat and suggested direct correspondence between the two, pointing out in a letter to Laurier that the offer of the premiership "will do much to move Sir O. M. to meet your views." Quite clearly the offer was that and no more, a gesture of esteem rather than a promise that anyone expected would have to be redeemed. Within a few weeks the negotiations were complete, undoubtedly with Laurier giving guarantees on trade policy, and Mowat entered the campaign with a promise of a cabinet position. In a letter to Blake on June 25 Mowat reported that he had not consented willingly, but that his first notion had been to refuse:

"It was rather as a matter of courtesy than anything else that I temporised a little, but during the delay I found that our friends thought I wd. render essential service by joining Laurier."

Naturally much was made of Mowat's decision. After the election the Globe led a good many English-Canadian Liberal papers in speaking of the Laurier-Mowat administration and party, and in Quebec La Presse referred to "la ministre





Laurier-Mowat."

How much reality there was behind the appearance, however, is uncertain. Most of the decisions about cabinet formation and Liberal policy had been made in advance of Mowat's entry into federal politics. Fielding, Blair, Dobell, Fitzpatrick, Davies had all been guaranteed cabinet positions. Mowat may have helped keep Cartwright out of Finance, but Laurier was sufficiently well aware of the views of the industrial, commercial and financial community not to need any prompting on that score.<sup>1</sup> R. W. Scott, too, had both claims on the party and obvious defects that did not need a Mowat to spell out.<sup>2</sup> Whether he was influential in securing a position for Paterson and Mulock cannot be determined. Paterson was being touted by the manufacturers, being one of them, while

1. Laurier was under considerable pressure to leave Cartwright out of the cabinet completely. Willison wired on June 25: "In view of the critical condition of many manufacturing establishments throughout the country, the general stagnation, the fear of the banks of trade disturbance, I fear that to put Sir Richard Cartwright into the government may precipitate a very serious scare with unfortunate consequences." Others suggested that Cartwright could go as High Commissioner to London. More widespread, however, was the desire that he not be given another portfolio. The pressure came almost entirely from the secondary manufacturing, financial and commercial lobby in Ontario, who also informed Mowat of their views and doubtless looked to him to protect their interests if Laurier did not. Laurier needed no one to convince him.
2. There was also considerable opposition to R. W. Scott, particularly among Ontario Catholics who were being organized to promote other candidates but also from Ontario Liberals who felt he had passed his prime. Irish Catholics maintained that Scott, despite his Irish Protestant father and Scottish Catholic mother, had no following among either Irish or Catholics. Scott told Laurier on June 30 that he realized there was opposition, but argued that in light of his past services and senior position in the party it would be humiliating to be left out.



Mulock had as yet few enemies, good Toronto connections, and, owning a farm in York county, could pose as a representative of the agrarian interests - the only one who could do so from Ontario or the Maritimes. According to John Charlton (Diary, August 27) it was "a little cabal at Toronto consisting of Jaffray, Cox, Sutherland, Hardy, Mulock and a few others [who] fixed the slate for Ontario." Surely, Charlton would have known had Mowat been given the power of the veto. Moreover, Mowat's good friend, David Mills, was not invited to enter the cabinet. Although Mills had lost his seat, arrangements could have been made had Mowat been so inclined or been given his preference.

## II Laurier's Consultations With English Canadians

To the extent that we have any evidence it would appear that Laurier consulted English-Canadians only about the non-Quebec wing of the cabinet, and there is nothing to suggest that Mowat, Davies, Cartwright et al were in any way involved in the background negotiations to the entry of Fisher, Dobell and Fitzpatrick. The evidence does suggest, however, that J. Israel Tarte was privy to many of the decisions about English-Canadian members and that before and after the election he was the closest man to Laurier. However, it might be assumed or argued that the selection of Dobell and Joly, and to a lesser extent Fitzpatrick, owed something to known English-Canadian views. Dobell was another spokesman for the trade policy apparently demanded in much of English





Canada; Joly was widely respected in English Canada and his appointment was hailed as being sufficient to check the political immorality that had disgraced the Mercier régime and much of the old Liberal guard, which many associated with the political tactics of Tarte; and Fitzpatrick was to represent not the province of Quebec, or the city of Quebec, so much as the Irish Catholic community in general. The decisions, however, appear to have been Laurier's and all seem to have been made before the election, as shall be seen.

### III Laurier's Choices in Quebec

In selecting the Quebec contingent Laurier must have worked on one assumption: that as a French-Canadian Prime Minister he could personally speak for the entire province of Quebec, and certainly the French-speaking community. Apart from honouring Tarte as party organizer and the instrument through which the fusion of moderate liberalism with moderate conservatism could be achieved, he was not really concerned about representation. Indeed, his chief concern seems less to have been to attract various elements within the community to the party, than to exclude the unwanted by the absence of portfolios. As the hostile Quebec press pointed out after the cabinet was announced, Laurier had only given two cabinet positions - and one portfolio - to representative French-Canadians: Tarte and Geoffrion. (Because of his Protestantism many papers preferred not to include Joly as a true member of the French-Canadian society.)



There is nothing in the evidence to support the charge made by critics that Laurier had bent over backwards to placate English Canada by choosing three English Canadians from Quebec. The three appointments are in themselves explicable. The appointment of Sydney Fisher as Minister of Agriculture was taken for granted by every newspaper, English and French. He administered his department well and handled the patronage of the eastern townships without complaint throughout the Laurier administration. The appointments of Fitzpatrick and Dobell appear to have been linked. Laurier wanted Dobell to run as a Liberal and to enter the cabinet. Dobell had been a Conservative, but was prepared to switch to the Liberals. Laurier wanted him in the party as a representative of the commercial interests of Quebec, as public reassurance that the Liberals would be "all right" on commercial policy, and to assist in forwarding the fast Atlantic line. Late in May Fitzpatrick reported that he was satisfied with a manifesto that Dobell would issue on the question of tariff reform in which the latter stated that he was in favour of tariff reform, which would have to be preliminary to imperial preference; opposed to high tariffs; would support freer trade within the Empire; and would work towards fair reciprocal trade with the United States. Fitzpatrick told Laurier that "Dobell will be of assistance to us and he is the best available candidate under the circumstances." A week after the election Laurier put in writing what he must have planned



from the beginning - an invitation to join the cabinet as a minister without portfolio. Laurier expressed his pleasure in finding them in agreement on the trade question which is "in my estimation the one question upon which the future of our country now depends" and stated that he was determined to make the cabinet "as strong as possible from a commercial point of view ... [and] the one thing which I would particularly desire should be to have you as an adviser of His Excellency to aid us to frame the new modifications of the tariff and to prepare new channels for the trade of Canada."

To enable Dobell to run uncontested in Quebec West it was essential that Fitzpatrick accept nomination in Quebec county, at least so a letter from Fitzpatrick to Laurier on May 27 states. Fitzpatrick, who had earlier declined to be a candidate because it would cost him between four and five thousand dollars and hurt his law practice, declared that his Irish Catholic supporters would be reluctant to see him run in Quebec county. However, he told Laurier, he would tell them of the offer of the Solicitor Generalship for "the prospect of my being in a position to be useful to them will help somewhat I think." There were doubtless other reasons for Fitzpatrick's appointment. Although he ran as a Liberal with independent leanings in the provincial election of 1890 he had been offered a position in the De Boucherville cabinet. Moreover, he was a brilliant lawyer who had made a reputation as counsel for Riel and Mercier and in the McGreevy affair. With a French-Canadian wife, he moved





easily in the English and French worlds. A Catholic, he had good standing among the hierarchy and was selected to visit Rome on the crucial 1897 mission. Finally, he was one of the most outstanding Irish Catholics in the country - far more able than the Ryans and the Devlins who were clamouring for the Irish Catholic portfolio - and it was understood that he was the Irish Catholic representative in the ministry.<sup>3</sup>

Given Laurier's determination to attract moderates and stay as clear as possible of the Liberal machine that had been disgraced by the Mercier scandals, as well as his desire to recognize past services, the appointment of Sir Henri Joly de Lotbinière was virtually inevitable. Although Joly was a Protestant he had been repeatedly re-elected in provincial and federal politics since 1861 with the backing of an almost exclusively Catholic constituency. He had retired from provincial politics in 1885 because he disapproved of the extreme Liberal agitation over Riel and remained aloof from the Mercier Liberals. Presumably at Laurier's urging he had re-entered political life and was vice-chairman at the 1893 convention and agreed to run in 1896. In all probability he had a portfolio in his pocket - although he was not one to insist on it - when he agreed to run, for his close friend Lady Aberdeen could state

3. In a letter to Laurier on February 28, 1897 Fitzpatrick wrote:  
"I am nominally the representative of the Irish Catholics but in reality they would be better without anyone at all as I am never consulted and everything is done in such a way as to provoke and exasperate them."



before the election that Joly would be in the cabinet if Laurier was elected. In Quebec and throughout Canada Joly was a hostage to honesty and integrity in the administration, and to English Canada reassurance that the Quebec wing of the cabinet would not slip into the pattern associated with Mercier (and Tarte). At the same time, however, Laurier regarded his tenure as short, and sent him off to British Columbia as lieutenant-governor when a vacancy occurred.

To Laurier, if not to everyone, Tarte was an automatic choice for the cabinet. Many English-Canadian Liberals had still not accepted him or accustomed themselves to his style of politics or journalism, and many Quebec Liberals still regarded him as a Conservative and a newcomer who somehow had stolen the ear of their leader. But since his unusual defection from the Conservatives Tarte had become Laurier's right-hand man, responsible not only for party organization and party battles with all comers - leaving Laurier freer to pursue the paths of sweet reason - but also the confidant of the Liberal chieftain. Some Liberals opposed his selection. Louis Frechette, for example, wrote to Laurier on June 29 stating that the general opinion was that he should take Geoffrion, Fisher, F. Langelier and Joly, with Langelier to retire soon and give way to Tarte. Others questioned whether Tarte's services were as great as Laurier imagined. Calixte Lebeuf, two years later, after describing Tarte as a vilain and a viliponteur declared that the Liberals won not because of Tarte but because they had worked for twenty-five





years to convert Quebecers to the principles of Liberalism. But to Laurier Tarte was essential both as an organizer and the instrument for absorbing into the Liberal party the school of Cartier and Chapleau. And before and after the election he, of all people, was in the very centre of Liberal strategy and cabinet formation.

What remained was to placate the rouges or old guard who, while they were not to be admitted to the charmed circle of real power, were nonetheless too important to ignore completely. From the Montreal district Laurier selected C. A. Geoffrion, member of an old rouge family and an automatic choice. Whether Geoffrion was ever offered a portfolio or whether he turned one down to concentrate on his law practice as some suggested is unknown. At any rate it is highly unlikely he was offered a major portfolio, if any. Laurier also offered a cabinet post to Sir Charles A. P. Pelletier, who had sat in the Red Chamber since 1877. But as Laurier knew, Pelletier was too fond of his lucrative position as City Attorney of Quebec and much preferred the less onerous task of Speaker of the Senate and member of the patronage board. Having decided to take Joly, Laurier then authorized Pelletier to make an "offer-that-was-not-to-be-accepted" to François Langelier. Langelier was foolish enough to indicate he would accept a cabinet position, apparently not realizing until later that his connection with the Mercier régime was too close and that Laurier could not have all four members from Quebec City in



the cabinet.<sup>4</sup> However, Langelier was softened with the promise of a position on the bench. Some old rouges such as Alfred Thibodeau and François Béchard went to the Senate, while others received appointments at the hand of the government.

#### IV French-Canadian Press Reaction to the Quebec Representation

There appears to have been a marked difference between the French and English concerns during the period of cabinet formation. While the French press was as absorbed in the comings and goings in the Windsor Hotel in Montreal, where the behind-the-scenes negotiating went on, and the possible membership in the cabinet, as the English-Canadian press, it showed little concern for the disposition of portfolios. Many French papers were content to reprint the educated guesses of the English-language newspapers. Nor is there anything to suggest that French-Canadian Liberals were very concerned about the disposition of the portfolios. Le Temps reported after the cabinet had been announced that Tarte wanted to be Minister of Railways, but apart from this there is nothing in the public or private documentation to reveal the slightest concern. Whether this was because with a French-Canadian Prime Minister there was no need to have one or more French Canadians holding important posts to properly represent the province - as Chapleau insisted vainly in 1891-92 - is unknown.

What is striking, however, is that in the period of cabinet

4. See below, page



formation the French press, like the English, seemed content to pass out all the major portfolios to English Canadians. No English newspaper gave a major portfolio to a French Canadian with the exception of Public Works which several hopefully gave to Joly. Tarte was variously given Inland Revenue or Secretary of State, Geoffrion was occasionally mentioned as a possible Solicitor General or Secretary of State and the Montreal Gazette gave Langelier Public Works. Some newshounds predicted a French-Canadian Speaker. But English and French press alike gave Finance, Trade and Commerce, Railways, Interior, Militia, Fisheries and Justice to English Canadians.

In the end the Laurier cabinet was much as had been predicted by the press, particularly after the word got out that Cartwright would not get Finance. As announced the ministry was:

Laurier	President of the Council
Mowat	Minister of Justice
Fielding	Minister of Finance
Cartwright	Minister of Trade and Commerce
Borden	Minister of Militia
Blair	Minister of Railways
Davies	Minister of Fisheries
Mulock	Post Office
Paterson	Customs





Fitzpatrick	Solicitor-General
Scott	Secretary of State
Dobell	Without Portfolio
Joly	Inland Revenue
Tarte	Public Works
Geoffrion	Without Portfolio
Sifton <sup>5</sup>	Interior-designate

The Treasury Board was also unbalanced with Tarte sitting among Cartwright, Davies, Borden, Scott and Fielding.

During the same period there was nothing to suggest that French Canadians either demanded equal representation or even relative representation with English Canada in the cabinet. Nor is there anything to suggest that commitments were demanded concerning policy or legislation from Laurier as a condition of entering the cabinet, as there quite clearly were, on the trade question at least, by English Canadians.

The reaction to the announcement of the membership of the Laurier cabinet may give more insight into the feeling

5. Sifton had actually been selected as the Western Canadian representative from the beginning. Dalton McCarthy had won Brandon as well as his Ontario riding, and his resignation would clear the way for Sifton once the Manitoba School Question had been settled. Joseph Martin expected and desperately wanted a cabinet post, but Laurier could use Martin's defeat as an excuse for not making the appointment. Clearly, however, Laurier would never have appointed Martin to the cabinet. Martin picked up a rumour that Laurier had rejected him because the appointment would be unpopular in Quebec, and informed Laurier that Tarte had assured him there was no objection to him in Quebec despite his outspoken and aggressive comments on the racial and religious question.



of French Canada than the official correspondence. It was natural, of course, that the Liberal press would be unlikely to cast a shadow on the Laurier government in its first few hours. La Patrie, for example, July 14, thought the Cabinet was the best since Confederation (although Laurier's more modest view was that he thought he had done pretty well) and the English-Canadian Liberal press, both in Quebec and outside, although disapproving of some members, and the disposition of some portfolios, was generally laudatory. The Conservative or independent press in Quebec, however, was fairly unanimous in its condemnation.

Le Temps declared that "M. Laurier règnera, mais ne gouvernera point", and described the first act of the government as "la plus profonde humiliation nationale qui eût pu être infligée à la race française." The editorial went on to say that, of the five important cabinet posts, Justice, Finance, Railways, Interior, Trade and Commerce, none was given to French Canadians and that indeed there were only three French-Canadian names in the whole cabinet. A few days later Le Temps lamented:

"Nous formons dans le pays une minorité dont les traits ont été assez méconnus pour qu'il ne soit pas permis de sacrifier le moindre parcelle de notre influence.... Nous aurons l'honneur d'avoir un premier ministre français, mais c'est un honneur vide qui va nous coûter trop cher."

La Minerve (Tory) found it difficult to image a worse cabinet:





"En parcourant cette liste, on constate tout de suite- et avec regret - que M. Laurier a commencé son règne en sacrifiant la province de Québec pour se faire pardonner d'être catholique et Canadien-français.

"La province de Québec ne reçoit que deux ministres importants, l'agriculture qui est confiée à M. Fisher, anglais et protestant, et les travaux publics, donnés à M. Tarte - un triste représentant de notre race. M. Laurier ne prend que la présidence du Conseil. Quant à M. Joly, un protestant, et M. Fitzpatrick, un Irlandais Catholique, ils ne sont mis que dans des postes secondaires, sous la dépendance de leurs collègues. M. Joly relève de Sir Richard Cartwright et M. Fitzpatrick est soumis à Sir Oliver Mowat. Ils sont ce que les libéraux nommaient avec toute l'ironie possible, des apprentis ministres.

"Et dans tout le ministère, on ne trouve que quatre [sic:5] catholiques. Jamais le représentative de nos coréligionnaires n'ont été aussi faible dans le gouvernement fédéral."

La Minerve also reported that Tarte desperately wanted Railroads and wondered why, despite his great efforts for the party, he had not received it. The only conclusion that La Minerve could come to was:

"Malgré cela, il a pitoyablement échoué. Pourquoi? En vertu de préjugé qu'un Canadien français ne peut pas faire un bon ministre des chemins de fer, tout comme on croyait à Québec que seul un Anglais pouvait être trésorier, et, au conseil de ville, que les Canadiens-français n'avaient pas le droit de prétendre à la présidence du comité des finances."

On the following day, July 15, La Minerve headlined its editorial "A la porte les Canadiens!"

"Tout le monde en parle, conservateurs comme libéraux. Sur la rue, dans les bureaux, dans les clubs, personne ne fait mystère de l'humiliation sanglante qui nous est infligée ...

"Il a sacrifié ses compatriotes; il a ignoré le district de Montréal tout entier.

"Sur quatorze ministres, il ne nous accorde que deux Canadiens-français, lui-même qu'il ne pouvait raisonnablement exclure, et l'honorable M. Tarte ... Est-ce faiblesse, est-ce lâcheté, est-ce trahison, nous ne savons; mais la province de Québec se trouve profondément humiliée et rabaisée.



"C'est le premier acte ministériel de M. Laurier, et ce début est une capitulation honteuse, presque un déshonneur national."

On the 17th La Minerve was still railing and talking of treason:

"Est-ce par trahison? M. Laurier, nous le croyons maintenant, n'est pas un Machiavel. Est-ce par un sentiment anti-national, c'est-à-dire Canadien-français? Sans être épris outre mesure de sa nation, M. Laurier ne fera rien de propos délibéré, nous disent ses amis, pour simplement et uniquement l'humilier et l'ignorer."

The Quebec Morning Chronicle, an independent conservative paper, joined the chorus of abuse, telling Laurier that he had disappointed everyone by his liberality towards the English. With his Quebec majority Laurier had the right to five colleagues of his nationality and faith, but had remained content with Tarte and Geoffrion. It was, said the Chronicle, the first time since Confederation that only two portfolios had been given to French Canada. The Toronto Globe also seemed to realize that with the victory gained in the province of Quebec French Canada might have expected the lion's share of the cabinet, and the Globe congratulated Quebec on its moderation. The Globe's comments prompted La Presse to remark: "Hélas! ce n'est probablement pas la dernière capitulation que nous aurons à enregistrer: la peur de cri de 'French domination', la nécessité de donner l'exemple du désintéressement pour maintenir la concorde dans le cabinet, exigeront bien d'autres sacrifices." Le Monde recalled Laurier's famous March 3 speech where he had declared that as the leader of a national party he spoke neither as a French Canadian nor as a Catholic.





Therefore do not be worried about a French Canadian Prime Minister, said Le Monde ironically: "M. Laurier a tenu sa promesse: il a oublié qu'il est Canadien français et catholique ... c'est bien que nous avions prévu."

4. Laurier's attempt to soothe Francois Langelier can be seen in correspondence between Laurier, Langelier and Pelletier in July 1896. The nature of Laurier's offer is explained by Pelletier's report of his meeting with Langelier:

"Langelier vient de me montrer tout tard la lettre qu'il t'a écrite. Pour éviter tout mal entendu je lui avais conseillé d'écrire lui même la reponse - Car quand je lui ai transmis ton message ce matin il a paru un peu piqué parce que je lui ai dit que d'abord tu n'avais pas pensé à lui offrir une portefeuille parceque lui et sa femme avaient toujours dit qu'ils ne voulaient pas rester dans la politique -- Sa lettre ne représente pas bien ce que je lui ait dit de ta part -- Je lui ai spécialement dit que, décidé de lui donner la première place vacante sur le Banc, tel qu'il avait toujours laissé entendre tu croyais qu'il ne désirerait pas entrer dans le Cabinet. Je n'ai pas oublié non plus de lui dire que s'il acceptait un portefeuille, ce serait plus difficile de lui donner une bonne place de juge, .. supposant que ceci se présenterait dans un an ou deux -- mais que néanmoins s'il préférerait courir le risque tu étais prêt à lui offrir un siège dans le cabinet. Je lui ai bien exprimé le danger qu'il y aurait peut être d'accepter un portefeuille -- Il m'a répondu qu'il ne comptait pas sur une place de juge avant longtemps - qu'il n'acceptera pas une place de juge à la campagne, et que les probabilités .... qu'il n'y aurait pas de vacance à Québec avant plusieurs années. Je vois qu'il préfère prendre la première chance qui se présente j'en suis surpris --- Tout de mieux il te dit à la fin de sa lettre que si le choix d'un autre rend ton organisation plus facile il te laisse parfaitement libre. Tout de mieux c'est évident qu'il préfère accepter - Cela sera peutêtre encore une difficulté pour toi. J'aurais bien voulu te l'éviter - je lui ai pourtant bien expliqué qu'en entrant dans le Cabinet il s'exposait peutêtre à perdre la première vacance de juge si cette vacance survenait dans quelques mois - Mais comme je te l'ai dit il n'a pas l'air à croire à la possibilité d'une chance avant plusieurs années -- Néanmoins fais pour le mieux et quel qu'en soient les conséquences ---





"Je comprends que sous les circonstances Joly aurait été un élément fort pour la Cabinet -- Si tu décides de prendre Langelier tu pourrais peut être nommer Joly ministre sans portefeuille."

Langelier did not get the message, however, and told Laurier that

"Dans ces circonstances je crois qu'il vaut mieux pour moi accepter votre offre. Mais j'y mets une condition: c'est que cela ne dérange pas des combinaisons que vous auriez peut-être désiré faire dans l'intérêt du parti, car, avant tout, je ne voudrais pas vous causer d'embarras alors, que vous allez en avoir tant."

Laurier did not follow up, however, and in a letter to Louis Bilodeau, Langelier revealed a new and deeper insight into Laurier's diplomacy of cabinet making.

"Je regrette que vous ne m'ayez rencontré ce matin, et je m'empresse de vous donner les explications que vous me demandez dans votre lettre.

"1<sup>o</sup>. Vous me dites que M. Pacaud vous a affirmé que M. Laurier m'avait écrit pour m'offrir une place dans son cabinet, et que j'avais répondu que je préférerais une place de juge.

"Cette assertion est complètement erronée: jamais M. Laurier ne m'a sérieusement offert une place dans son cabinet. Il m'a complètement ignoré dans les négociations qu'il a eues à Montréal avec un bon nombre d'amis. Au cours de ces négociations il a mandé le sénateur Pelletier. A son retour, celui-ci m'a dit que M. Laurier lui avait offert un portefeuille, et que, sur son refus, M. Laurier lui avait dit qu'il allait le donner à M. Joly. Toujours d'après M. Pelletier, celui-ci aurait suggéré mon nom, et ladessus M. Laurier, l'avait chargé de m'offrir une place dans son gouvernement, et désirait avoir ma réponse le même jour. Le même jour j'ai écrit à M. Laurier que j'acceptais son offre, mais que je ne voulais pas cependant être un obstacle à quelque combinaison qu'il trouverait plus avantageuse pour le parti. Il m'a répondu me remerciant de ma générosité, mais il ne m'a pas parlé de portefeuille. J'en ai conclu ou bien que M. Pelletier l'avait mal compris, ou bien qu'il avait changé d'idée, ou bien qu'il avait trouvé quelque chose de plus avantageuse au parti que mon entrée dans le gouvernement. Cette dernière hypothèse était évidemment la vraie, puisque, quelques jours après, il formait son gouvernement sans plus s'occuper de moi et y faisait entrer M. Joly avec portefeuille, M. Dobell sans portefeuille, et M. Fitzpatrick comme solliciteur-général.



"Un incident, bien pénible pour moi est venu me montrer que M. Laurier désirait m'écarter de son gouvernement, mais croyait devoir m'offrir une compensation pécuniaire pour le refus d'un portefeuille: il m'a fait promettre la première place de juge ou de lieutenant-gouverneur qui deviendrait vacante, comme si je m'étais présenté pour avoir une place lucrative, alors que je l'avais fait sur les sollicitations pressantes de M. Pelletier pourtant au nom de M. Laurier lui-même, et qui me disait que ma retraite au moment de la lutte, non seulement allait nous faire perdre Québec-Centre, mais pouvait amener une détendard qui nous ferait peut être perdre une demi douzaine de comtés. Je vois bien maintenant ce que je soupçonnais depuis plusieurs années: pour nous punir, mon frère et moi, de ce que nous avons toujours été sur la brèche depuis tant d'années, nos adversaires, après la chute du gouvernement Mercier, ont entrepris contre nous une campagne de diffamation atroce. Il est évident ou bien que M. Laurier a ajouté foi à ces caolmnies, ou bien qu'il en a redouté l'effet. Un petit incident l'a démontré l'autre jour: le soir du grand triomphe, à la jour du Pacifique, devant un grand nombre d'électeurs de Quebec - Est dont beaucoup s'étaient saigné à blâme (sic) pour l'élection de Montmorency, M. Laurier a déploré la défaite de M. Tarte, mais n'a pas osé exprimer un regret de celle de mon frère qui, pourtant, leur tenait plus à coeur que celle de M. Tarte.

"Vous voyez par les longues explications qui précèdent que je n'ai pas, comme beaucoup de mes amis paraissent le croire, sacrifié les intérêts de ceux qui ont fait tant d'efforts et de sacrifices pour me faire élire, en refusant un portefeuille, pour avoir une place de juge: j'aurais volontiers renoncé à être nommé juge pour prendre un portefeuille si M. Laurier eût voulu m'en donner un."





## CHAPTER 4

### The Cabinet of 1911

By Roger Graham

On September 21, 1911, the day of the Dominion general election, the Montreal newspaper La Patrie informed its readers, and through advertisements in the other local papers the residents of Montreal generally, of an electrifying method of revealing the election result. It had, the notice explained, been arranged with the Montreal Light, Heat and Power Company, "whose courtesy is so well known," that that night between the hours of nine and eleven the lights of the city would be turned off once for a fraction of a minute if Sir Wilfrid Laurier and the Liberals were triumphant, twice if R. L. Borden and his Conservatives were the winners. In the evening, at the close of one of the bitterest political campaigns since Confederation, the citizens of the metropolis waited restlessly for the signal. Suddenly the lights went out, came on and then, after a long, agonizing moment filled with mingled hope and fear, went out again. Thus, in Montreal on that equinoctial night, the end of an era in Canadian politics was announced.

#### I The Conservative-Nationalist Alliance and the 1911 Election

A change of government invariably excites great interest in the process of cabinet-making and the interest is even more intense if, as was the case in 1911, the newly victorious party has been long in opposition. There will be no dearth



of eager aspirants, most of them backed by a body of supporters to belabour the prime minister-designate with exhortations and advice, but there may be few men still on the scene who are obviously qualified by former experience to assume portfolios and are acceptable on other grounds as well. As Sir William Van Horne put it to Borden a few days after the election, the "Conservatives of Canada have been long enough out of power to have lost the office-holding habit and there are very few 'left overs' to claim anything." On the basis of that fact Van Horne, not a practising politician, proceeded to attribute to Borden a freedom of choice that was more illusory than real. "You can therefore commence with new and sound materials," he wrote, "and build an enduring structure and one that will stand as a model for future governments..... A good many people think they have claims upon you and will be disgruntled if you pass them by and some of the undesirables are prominent and influential; but if they are in the least degree tainted or under suspicion I earnestly hope you will have nothing of them--that you will not take one such into your Cabinet. . . . Above all I hope you will be THE LEADER. . ."<sup>1</sup>

Well, Borden was the leader, as he was to demonstrate conclusively in the coming years, but like all men in his position he was surrounded by restrictions and restraints when it came to choosing his colleagues. It was not, of course, merely a matter of weighing the claims and talents

1. Public Archives of Canada, Borden Papers, OC 47, Van Horne to Borden, Sept. 24, 1911.



of individuals, of taking the best or most deserving men. A host of prudential considerations had to be kept in mind if the cabinet was to be as broadly representative of the country as Canadian cabinets are expected to be. Various sectional, occupational, ethnic and religious interests had to be represented, and these might take precedence over the strong claims to preferment of certain individuals. But it is always so in Canada and in that respect Borden's problem of selection was no different from that of any other prime minister. There was, though, one feature of the situation in 1911 that was unusual and this made the problem even more complicated than it would otherwise have been.

The fact was that the victory of the Conservatives, a victory both decisive and sensational, had been materially assisted, as far as one could judge, by two groups which had not hitherto been supporters of the Conservative party, groups which would demand membership or at least influence in the new administration. One was the assortment of Liberal Toronto businessmen who had issued a manifesto against Laurier's proposed Reciprocity Agreement with the United States and had worked tirelessly to bring about his defeat. The other was the Nationalist faction in Quebec whose leading figure was Henri Bourassa and who reacted violently against Laurier's Naval Bill of 1910. The claims of the first group were satisfied by the appointment of one of their number, W. T. White, as Minister of Finance. The case of the Quebec Nationalists was more complex and requires some explanation.





The complexity was caused in part by the difficulty of deciding just who was a Nationalist in 1911 and who a Conservative. The views of the Nationalists and of most French-speaking Conservatives on the issue uppermost in the province--naval policy--were virtually indistinguishable from each other. Both groups were strongly against Laurier's decision to establish a Canadian navy which might be placed under the control of the British Admiralty in time of emergency anywhere in the world. Both, French Conservatives as much as Nationalists, were opposed to Borden's proposal that a cash contribution be made to pay for new ships to strengthen the British navy, in order to help meet the immediate menace of expanding German power on the seas. Although the Nationalists were described by one prominent Quebec Conservative who was allied with them in 1911 as "nothing else but dissatisfied Liberals,"<sup>2</sup> on the burning issue in Quebec they were at one with the bulk of the Conservatives, and their candidates in the election ran under the label of Conservative-Nationalist.

The closeness of the alliance between the two elements and the extent to which so many French Conservatives had divorced themselves from the rest of the party on the naval question were demonstrated by, among other things, the stance adopted by the leading French-speaking Conservative, F. D. Monk, and by his relationship with Bourassa. Although he was, rather remotely in his lineage, of Swiss and English ancestry, Monk had for years occupied a pre-eminent place

2. Ibid., W. B. Nantel to Borden, November 28, 1911.



among the French-Canadian Conservatives and in 1901 had been chosen federal Conservative leader in Quebec. (It may be noted in passing that this did not make him in any sense co-leader of the Opposition, nor was there any suggestion when the Borden Government was formed that Monk as one of its members was or should be regarded as co-prime minister.) Monk resigned as Quebec leader in 1904 without apparently suffering any marked loss of influence among his compatriots and six years later fell out with the main body of the party over naval policy, ceasing to attend the caucus. Shortly after the new Government took office in 1911, during a speech in the House of Commons, he tried to minimize his quarrel with Borden the previous year. Of all the Prime Minister's qualifications, said Monk, "there was none which I thought so outstanding . . . as his extreme delicacy in all relations. I cannot conceive how it is possible for any man to have any serious difference with the hon. gentleman who sits at my right."<sup>3</sup> But their disagreement had been serious enough for Monk, when a challenge to Borden's leadership was being made from another quarter, to refrain from signing a round robin beseeching him to stay on.<sup>4</sup> It had been serious enough to cause Monk to state at a public meeting at Drummondville in October 1910, as reported in Le Devoir:

3. Canada, Debates of the House of Commons (1911-12), vol. I, col. 233.

4. Heath N. Macquarrie, "The Formation of Borden's First Cabinet," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, vol. XXIII, no. 1, February 1957, p. 97, n. 22.





We are against the navy because we have something better to do with our money than to spend it on buying ships to serve the conflicts and entanglements of Great Britain. . . . I have separated myself from Mr. Borden on that important question and I will continue to fight the battle with my friends the Nationalists as long as the battle shall not be won. We are not going to abdicate our rights and our principles for the sake of Mr. Borden.<sup>5</sup> ~

Monk's first pronouncement on the naval issue, expressing views shared by a large number of other Quebec Conservatives, was made at a banquet at Lachine in November 1909, and it was this that paved the way for the alliance with Bourassa.<sup>6</sup> The two men had not been strangers to one another, of course. Indeed Monk's wife was the grand-daughter of a first cousin of Louis-Joseph Papineau, Bourassa's grandfather<sup>7</sup> and this, while not a very intimate family relationship, offered a tie of sentiment and kinship. Monk was an admirer of Bourassa despite the fact that they did not see eye to eye on every public issue and increasingly after the Lachine speech Bourassa, in his own speeches and his newly-founded paper Le Devoir, gave encouragement and support to Monk. The alliance between them was fully shown during a stormy federal by-election campaign in Drummond-Arthabaska in November 1910, when "Monkites" Conservatives, with Monk himself playing a prominent part, helped to elect a Nationalist candidate in a seat which had been held continuously by the Liberal party since 1887.

5. Quoted by Rodolphe Lemieux in House of Commons Debates (1911-12), vol. I, col. 257. Lemieux's speech is an admirable example of the parliamentary debating art of convicting one's opponents out of their own mouths.

6. Robert Rumilly, Henri Bourassa: La Vie Publique d'un Grand Canadien (Montreal, 1953), pp. 337-38.

7. Ibid., p. 385.



Thus by the time of the general election of 1911 the political union of Bourassa and Monk was complete and together they led the highly successful effort against Laurier in a province which since 1896 had furnished the solid base of the Liberal ascendancy.

Outside of the predominantly English-speaking ridings, at any rate, Borden apparently left the campaign in Quebec in the hands of Monk. Bourassa's biographer tells of a meeting called by Charles Beaubien, who had worked in his capacity as Conservative organizer on behalf of the Nationalist nominee in the Drummond-Arthabaska by-election. Beaubien brought together "chez lui quatre chefs: Herbert B. Ames, très impérialiste; C. J. Doherty, moins impérialiste; F.-D. Monk, un peu nationaliste; et Bourassa, nationaliste intégral. Ainsi se conclut une entente tacite, en vertu de laquelle Borden laissera virtuellement la province de Québec entre les mains de Monk; et Monk lui-même subit l'influence de Bourassa."<sup>8</sup> Thus Monk, despite his relinquishment of the position in 1904 and his complete disagreement with Borden on naval policy, was implicitly recognized in 1911 as le chef conservateur in Quebec. By the same token not only he but his Nationalist friends were assured of great influence in deciding who would represent the province in the cabinet if the Conservatives won the election. That influence would be all the greater if Quebec made a substantial contribution to the hoped for victory.

8. Ibid., p. 415.



Quebec's contribution was substantial--twenty-seven seats--even though it would have been possible for Borden to form a government had the party not won more than the eleven seats captured there in 1908. The extent to which Nationalist support accounted for this marked improvement is impossible to determine exactly. It may be, as one authority has written, that "the Nationalists . . . provided the popular platform and personnel, and the Conservatives . . . contributed the less obvious but helpful 'sinews' of campaign funds."<sup>9</sup> However, there is some reason to think that it was less a matter of the Monk Conservatives deliberately and cynically appropriating the Nationalist platform than of the two groups finding a natural basis of union in an attitude on the naval question and the general subject of imperialisme which expressed some of the fundamental fears and antipathies of the French Canadians. They were so close together on these matters that they could all fight the battle with a good conscience as autonomists, opposed equally to the Liberal plan of a Canadian naval force and the Conservative proposal of an emergency cash payment. As for personnel, there is no doubt that Bourassa and some of his lieutenants such as Armand Lavergne and Oliver Asselin put forth a herculean and effective effort. At the same time, though one cannot estimate with entire confidence, probably no more than twenty-five of the sixty-five opposition candidates in Quebec were

9. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 97.





actually Nationalists, of whom perhaps ten or eleven were elected. The fact is sometimes overlooked that in the four preceding general elections the Conservative party in Quebec, while never winning more than sixteen seats and on one occasion as few as eight, had always received more than forty per cent of the popular vote. It is not inconceivable that even had the Nationalists been out of the picture completely Monk could have exploited the naval issue to add substantially to this large traditionally Conservative strength and have captured a considerable number of additional seats.

But that is mere conjecture. The Nationalists were very much in the picture and it is only reasonable to assume that that fact was largely responsible for the Conservative candidates (including those who were actually Nationalists) receiving only about 5,000 fewer votes in all than the total given to their Liberal opponents. They got more than forty-nine per cent of the ballots, a gain of about eight and one-half per cent over the Conservative showing in 1908. This shift caused the Liberals to lose a number of ridings in which the Conservatives had hitherto done reasonably well but not well enough. It was a striking success which guaranteed Monk and his Nationalist allies a strong voice in the intricate negotiations about to take place regarding the makeup of the cabinet.

Monk and his supporters, however, were not the only French-speaking element in Quebec whom Borden had to consider, for the French Conservatives were not wholly united behind Monk's leadership. There were some of the old fashioned bleu



variety who distrusted his association with Bourassa and Co., were less dogmatically "autonomist" in outlook and were not on very friendly terms with him personally. The three men among these "loyal", "orthodox" and "pre-Nationalist" Conservatives most often mentioned as possible ministers were T. Chase Casgrain, Rodolphe Forget and L. T. Maréchal. Casgrain was handicapped in his own province by the fact that he had been one of the prosecuting counsel at the trial of Louis Riel, as well as a leading accuser of Honoré Mercier at the latter's trial on charges of corruption in 1892, and he was, in Nationalist circles at least, "considéré comme la plus impérialiste des Canadiens-français."<sup>10</sup> One gathers that there was a good deal of skepticism about Forget's ability to discriminate between the temptations of private gain and the requirements of public service ("a speculator, first, last and always" one of Borden's correspondents called him)<sup>11</sup> and it was argued that it would be unfitting to take a stock broker into the Government in any capacity. As far as one can judge there was less objection to Maréchal on personal grounds, aside from the fact that he was not identified with the Nationalist viewpoint, but, like Casgrain, he had not contested a seat in the election and, not being numbered among the elect, was possibly in a less strong position than he might otherwise have been. Nonetheless, both he and Casgrain had support.

10. Rumilly, op. cit., p. 424.

11. P.A.C., Borden Papers, RLB 2993 (6), G. E. Drummond to Borden, September 29, 1911, private.





So had Forget, who had run and won in two ridings as the law then allowed. Would it be possible to get at least one of them in to balance Nationalist influence? There promised to be quite a tug-of-war between the Monk and the non-Monk Conservatives, with Borden in the uncomfortable position of being almost certain to antagonize one group or the other no matter what was decided upon.

## II Letters to Borden about Cabinet Appointments from Quebec

In all the speculation about the composition of the new cabinet one of the few things that seemed to be almost universally taken for granted was that Monk was assured of a place. There were daily reports in the press about what politicians had been closeted with Borden, who "remained at home, where he met his carefully selected visitors."<sup>12</sup> The journalists kept their readers posted as to what dignitaries had come to the capital and which other ones were said to be on their way. There were, of course, rumours galore concerning which portfolio would go to this or that individual, and which individuals would go without. A lot of this gossip was fanciful guesswork to say the least. One story, for example, had it that Sam Hughes might be appointed aide-de-camp to the newly chosen Governor General, the Duke of Connaught, a bit of whimsy which gravely underestimated both Hughes and the well organized letter-writing campaign on his behalf to which Borden was subjected. There were suggestions that

12. The Gazette (Montreal), October 5, 1911.



Sir William Van Horne be made Minister of Railways and Canals, though apparently no firm predictions that he would be, and what a bonny thought it is to picture him at a cabinet meeting or in the House of Commons! As far as Quebec was concerned there was much conjecture over whether Herbert Ames, George Perley or Rufus Pope (a dark horse definitely) would represent the English-speaking minority; whether C. J. Doherty (almost a sure bet, most agreed) or someone from another province would be the Irish Roman Catholic member; which one or two in addition to Monk from among Bourassa, Lavergne, W. B. Nantel, L. P. Pelletier, Casgrain, Maréchal, Forget and various other worthies would make up the French-Canadian cabinet contingent. But about the future of Monk himself there was little if any doubt, except as to which portfolio would be his.

While this guessing game was being played in the newspapers Borden was bombarded with advice, much of it, of course, conveyed orally by those he consulted, some transmitted in writing. In view of the seemingly irreconcilable disagreement regarding naval affairs between the Nationalists and Monk Conservatives on the one hand and the balance of the Conservative party on the other, and keeping in mind the rather extreme anti-imperial sentiments expressed by some Nationalists and Monkites during the campaign, one would expect to find unusual interest displayed in English-speaking Canada in the choice of the French ministers. Fear that the Monk-Bourassa axis might obtain an undesirable measure





of power predominated in the opinions offered. The Hamilton Spectator, as staunchly Conservative a paper as there was in the country, doubtless spoke the minds of many people when it sternly warned the new Prime Minister not to knuckle under to Monk and his like.

Mr. Borden has been returned to power with a majority sufficient to permit him to be independent of Quebec, or rather that portion of it which is hostile to Canada's participation in Imperial naval warfare. He is in an ideal position and he should take full advantage of it. . . . there is need for a real naval policy for Canada, and the Spectator looks to Mr. Borden and his government to produce such a policy at the earliest possible moment. Mr. Monk may not like it and his Nationalist friends may object, but they are, after all, only a meagre minority, and, like all minorities, must yield to the will of the majority or move elsewhere. Meanwhile Mr. Borden doesn't have to promise Mr. Monk anything in respect to the naval question.<sup>13</sup>

Quebec, wrote Sam Sharpe of Ontario, who was being touted in some quarters as a prospective Minister of Militia, "should not have more than four seats at the very outside. I understand strong exertions are being made to have five portfolios for Quebec. This should not be allowed on the showing of the Province."<sup>14</sup> J. S. Willison, the Toronto journalist and panjandrum, said he thought that while "we should deal generously with Quebec, surely it is in the West that the Conservative party must chiefly build for the future".<sup>15</sup> Willison evidently did not believe, even in the wake of the great Conservative triumph, that the future had already arrived.

13. October 6, 1911. Quoted in Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 97.

14. P.A.C., Borden Papers, RLB 2993 (7), Sharpe to Borden, October 2, 1911, private.

15. Ibid., Willison to Borden, October 5, 1911.





From an even more eminent source came a note of concern that Monk might extract some concession regarding naval matters. Early in October the retiring Governor General, Earl Grey, wrote to Borden:

I do not wish to thrust my advice upon you but I think it may perhaps be useful to you to be able to consult me when you are in any doubt as to which direction your duty to the Crown requires you to steer the ship of which you are now the pilot.

I have, as you are aware, only one desire, and that is to assist you in making such arrangements as will enable the King's government to be carried on in a way that will conduce to the strength and glory of Canada and the Crown. . . . I recognize the great difficulties of your position, and would like to help you if I can; as I know it is sometimes a help to a man to be able to explain his difficulties to some one who is sympathetic, anxious to help, and absolutely disinterested. I beg you will not hesitate to come to me, if you should wish to discuss any point on which you may very naturally be doubtful as to what the permanent interests of the country require. So long as I am in Canada my whole time and services shall be at your disposal.

Our short talk yesterday has I confess left me a little uneasy and apprehensive as to the difficulties that you are likely to encounter on the meeting of Parliament, unless you are able to satisfy the House of Commons that the presence of Mr. Monk among your colleagues on the Treasury Bench does not mean a weak or retrogressive Naval Policy.<sup>16</sup>

Similar considerations possibly were in the mind of J. K. Flemming, Provincial Secretary of New Brunswick, when he suggested that an Acadian from the Maritimes be included in the cabinet.<sup>17</sup> No doubt he was thinking of the interests of the Conservative party in his province, as well as of justice to the Acadians, but he may also have judged that an

16. Ibid., OC 47, Grey to Borden, October 2, 1911.

17. Ibid., RLB 2993 (7), Flemming to Borden, October 3, 1911.



Acadian would have a moderating influence on the other French-speaking ministers. It was an attractive proposal but not a very practicable one just then. The only elected French-speaking Conservative from the Maritime provinces was F. J. Robidoux of New Brunswick, whose mother was an Acadian, but he was only thirty-six years of age and his sole previous experience in public office was as a municipal secretary.

Of course not everyone who wrote to Borden from outside Quebec about the general composition of the cabinet shared the widely felt misgivings over the influence of Monk and Bourassa. So knowledgeable, important and interested a man as Clifford Sifton seems not to have cared much who represented the French Canadians in the Government. He sent Borden a list which, he said, "looks to me to be about the strongest slate you can make." For each province Sifton had jotted down the names of certain men but for Quebec his slate read: "Doherty--Perley--2 French."<sup>18</sup>

The views received by Borden from prominent English-speaking people in Quebec itself were, in certain cases at least, more carefully considered and better informed than most of those from outside. These people for the most part were more concerned than Sifton about which French Canadians were chosen and less fearful of the Nationalist virus than many outsiders. Above all they wanted the Conservative party to take advantage of the tie with the Nationalists to entrench itself strongly in Quebec once more. C. H. Cahan

18. Ibid., OC 103g, Sifton to Borden, September 30, 1911.





of Montreal, whose role not only in 1911 but over a long period of Canadian politics has yet to be adequately described and assessed, set forth his thoughts at some length in a letter to the Prime Minister. It made little difference to the political situation in Quebec, he wrote, whether Doherty was chosen to represent the Irish Catholics and whether Perley or Ames was appointed spokesman for the English-speaking Protestant element. "The selection of at least two French Canadian colleagues for Mr. Monk, who is as much English as French, is the matter of supreme concern in Quebec." Who should they be? "Of the two named in the press, Pelletier was a colleague of Mercier, is alleged to have been a grafter, and is now without political influence even in his own constituency; and Casgrain is entirely out of sympathy with the French Canadians, owing to his connection with the Riel and Mercier prosecutions . . . which have caused him to be execrated to this day throughout Quebec."

There were various men, Cahan continued, who would be acceptable to both French and English, men such as W. B. Nantel and J. M. Tellier, the provincial Conservative leader, but there was need for something more if the party were to enlarge and consolidate its beachhead in the province. Cahan explained:

Now I have been throughout Quebec night and day for six weeks, and from long experience I know the Latin temperament pretty well. There are thousands of young French Canadians who have been precluded from all consideration and advancement under Laurier, Lemieux, et al. All the old leaders of the old Bleu party are either dead and buried, or out of the game,



and these young men have had no name and no standard around which to rally except recently around the name and standard of Bourassa.

Bourassa's objective point is the Premiership of Quebec province. You need not worry about him. But to hold Quebec and to make Quebec the very citadel, as it naturally should be of the Conservative party, the spirit and influence of the young men of Quebec must find expression in your Cabinet.

Tellier, Nantel and others will, in a sense, suit both English and French; but give the young Nationalist sentiment one representative such as Lavergne, for instance, and you can make up in Quebec, even against Laurier's personal leadership in the province, all the losses which you must be prepared to suffer in Ontario, at the next election, when Reciprocity is no longer an issue, and when many Liberals in Ontario will naturally fall back into the old party ranks.

As to Forget, he is worthy of all consideration; he has made a splendid fight; but you cannot very well have a stock broker in your Cabinet even without portfolio; and the gambling game engrosses Forget soul and spirit. What Forget really wants is a title; and that you can promise him and, perhaps, fulfil your promise at an early day.<sup>19</sup>

Somewhat similar advice came from William Price, defeated in the riding of Quebec West which he had held since 1908.

In a memorandum to Borden, who may have been amused upon receiving it to recall that its author had been a leader of the intra-party intrigues against him,<sup>20</sup> Price presented his assessment. There must be three French-Canadian ministers and, following custom, two should be from the Montreal district, one from the Quebec district. Monk, of course, would be one of the two Montrealers. Who should the other be and who be taken from Quebec? Of the members elected, said Price, three--Nantel, Forget and Pelletier--might be

19. Ibid., OC A 207, Cahan to Borden, October 1, 1911, confidential.

20. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 101.



possibilities. Nantel was "a straight level headed man of good ability but lacking in experience in the larger sense." Forget was "very able and if it were not for his large business interests would be a good man for the ministry." As for Pelletier, he too was "able, an excellent debater and of good executive ability, but he is not trusted and is generally unpopular. He is however a powerful man." Price thought that Forget would satisfy either Montreal or Quebec and if he accepted a portfolio it would then be possible to take either Pelletier from the latter district or Nantel from the former. If Forget refused, "as is very probable," both Pelletier and Nantel could be brought in. Casgrain, "a splendid man," had been mentioned but it would be very difficult to elect him anywhere in the province.

Then Price came to the thought he seemed to be most anxious to convey. A further possibility was "to put Armand Lavergne as the minister for the Quebec District. He is very popular and a future leader." Lavergne, who as a member of the provincial Assembly had not contested a federal riding, would be able to "get a county without trouble. He would take with him the younger element and help to consolidate the party in the province." Price conceded that including so fiery a Nationalist in the Government might not sit very well in Ontario and elsewhere but was certain that it would "take" in Quebec. Lavergne, he assured Borden, "is not anti-British, nor is he small.





He is capable of great development, and has the qualifications for a future leader of the province." In the ministry, Price concluded, he "would be tied to us and would be a future asset." In a short note accompanying this memorandum Price remarked: "I may say Monk is very favorable to Lavergne. I have endeavoured to put the situation impartially."<sup>21</sup>

Like Cahan and Price, a third member of the English-speaking Establishment in Quebec--Van Horne--did not appear to be overly alarmed about Nationalist power and influence. Without venturing to recommend specifically which Quebecers should become ministers of the Crown he urged Borden to make a friendly overture to Bourassa.

. . . I have some reason to believe [Van Horne wrote] that without taking him into your arms or becoming in any way responsible for him you can make him a power for good instead of evil in Quebec. If you were to take advantage of an opportunity to send for him before long for a chat or, better, to ask his advice on some unimportant matter you will I am sure secure his good will and be able later on to steer him in the direction you wish. He feels that you have treated him with contempt and his vanity is hurt. Why not try the experiment? He knows well enough that you can't for political reasons make any concessions to his present political ideas.<sup>22</sup>

Implicit in the observations of Price and Van Horne was the assumption that, now that the election was over and they had served their purpose, the Nationalists could be controlled and perhaps even converted into regular law-abiding Conservatives. Lavergne could be tied to the party and made into an "asset" with a seat in the cabinet; Bourassa

21. P.A.C. Borden Papers, OC 47, Price to Borden, October 2, 1911, and accompanying memorandum.

22. Ibid., Van Horne to Borden, September 14, 1911.



could be disarmed and transformed into "a power for good" by being consulted on "some unimportant matter." It was not untypical of the Anglo-Saxon patricians of Quebec to believe that the leaders of the French could be managed and manipulated, but neither Bourassa nor Lavergne was the most manageable of men.

Also implicit in these submissions, as in that of Cahan, was a further assumption: that Borden was free to make his own choice of French-speaking colleagues. However, it is not entirely clear that he was, that he did much more than put his stamp of approval on the choices Monk made after prolonged and sometimes acrimonious discussions with other interested gentlemen from Quebec. Shortly after the election the defeated candidate in Laval constituency, J. E. E. Léonard, a Montreal lawyer, wrote to Borden: "The opinion of the great majority of our friends in Quebec is that Monk and Bourassa have made the result in our Province and I am sure that you can take the heart of the Quebec voters in choosing Mr. Monk as your lieutenant in Quebec and and [sic] give him a free hand in the choice of your Quebec colleagues."<sup>23</sup> Did Borden follow this advice? It was a question often asked but the true answer is not easy to find.

### III The Selection of the Quebec Ministers

Of one thing, though, there is no doubt: Monk was one of the first men, and first of all from Quebec, to be summoned





by Borden, who wired his invitation the day after returning to Ottawa in triumph from Halifax. Monk was in the capital the following morning.<sup>24</sup> Before that call came, however, he had talked over the situation with Bourassa. As the latter recounted it nearly two years later, Monk "began by assuring me that he had no intention whatever of renouncing the opinions he had expressed during the campaign" and then went on to say "that he would not enter the cabinet without me." Bourassa, neither suited by temperament nor inclined by choice to exchange his cherished independence for the restraints and responsibilities of public office, gave this idea short shrift. ". . . Mr. Borden, said I, cannot decently offer me a portfolio; and I cannot, for any consideration, enter a conservative cabinet." It was different, though, for Monk, an old Conservative, and Bourassa advised him to take a portfolio on terms which would require no sacrifice of principle, and to demand colleagues from Quebec who were acceptable to him. After this interview, Bourassa wrote, "I left for the country in order not to be a witness of the fight over the spoils--a thing for which I have very little taste, I admit,--as well as to be disinfected from a political campaign of two months' duration."<sup>25</sup>

24. P.A.C., Monk Papers, Borden to Monk, telegram, September 27, 1911; Borden Papers, OC 47, Monk to Borden, telegram, September 27, 1911.

25. In the spring of 1913 a series of fourteen articles by Bourassa was published in Le Devoir under the general title "Nationalism and the Parties." These quotations are from the twelfth article, "The Formation of the Cabinet: Borden Sold to the Nationalists," and are taken from a translation of the entire series in the Borden Papers, OC 37, as are other passages quoted subsequently in this paper.



Monk went up to Ottawa but what exactly was agreed upon between Borden and him as to the selection of the other French-speaking ministers is not precisely known. Bourassa's biographer states flatly: "Borden fait appeler Monk, qui choisira les ministres représentant la province de Québec."<sup>26</sup> Bourassa's version, however, is a little more equivocal. Borden, having offered Monk a portfolio, "virtually left to him the choice of his Quebec colleagues; or at least he gave him to understand that no representative from that province would be called to the cabinet without his knowledge and consent."<sup>27</sup> Monk himself was alleged to have stated at a political meeting late in October that he had been allowed to choose the other Quebec ministers. This led to questions in the House of Commons, first of all by Charles Murphy.

Mr. MURPHY:

1. Is the government aware that . . . Hon. F. D. Monk stated that the Prime Minister had allowed him to select his cabinet colleagues from the province of Quebec?

2. Was any Ontario minister accorded a similar privilege by the Prime Minister? If not, why was an exception made in the case of Hon. F. D. Monk?

Mr. BORDEN:

1. No. 28

2. Answered by the answer to No. 1.

Later in the same question period Frank Carvell asked:

1. Is the Prime Minister aware that the Minister of Public Works declared a few days ago that he had been entrusted with the choice of his colleagues in the Province of Quebec?

2. Who made the choice of the Quebec Ministers, the Prime Minister or the Minister of Public Works.

26. Rumilly, op. cit., p. 433.

27. Bourassa, "Formation of the Cabinet."

28. House of Commons Debates (1911-12), vol. I, col. 526.



Mr. BORDEN:

1. No.

2. The members of the cabinet were selected by the Prime Minister and their names submitted by him for approval in the usual constitutional manner.<sup>29</sup>

Of course in a formal sense the ministers must be chosen and recommended for appointment by the Prime Minister but Borden's answer does not remove the possibility that he acted according to Monk's wishes. One hesitates to reach a conclusion too confidently since matters of this kind were so often decided in private conversations of the substance of which no record exists. All that can be done is to try to reconstruct from the available documents what happened as the politicians came flocking to Ottawa to jockey for position and intrigue in smoke-filled rooms.

According to Bourassa he "had explained the situation to a few of our most devoted friends." After he left Montreal to "disinfect" himself they undertook to exert pressure in order to get the kind of Quebec representation they wanted.

Urged by a few conservatives who, I think, were sincere in their support of the nationalist ideas, they decided to take part in the fight and demand the appointment of ministers favourable to those ideas, or at least bound through their public pledges to defend them.

The "orthodox" conservatives, who had been conspicuous by their absence from the strifes of the last two years . . . and even during the general elections, had risen in all their might and power on the evening of the 21st of September.

Rested by a long sleep, they talked in stentorian tones; starved by a long fast, they had an immense

29. Ibid., col. 546.





appetite. Forced to accept Mr. Monk, whom they had been cursing for a long time, they demanded that his colleagues be real tories, free from any nationalist alloy. They were supported by the imperialists, headed by Sir Hugh Graham, who was waving aloft his receipts for election funds and his "promissory notes".<sup>30</sup>

Graham, the egocentric and machiavellian proprietor of the Montreal Daily Star, was strongly urging that either Maréchal<sup>31</sup> or Forget be included.

Bourassa explains that between the two clearly opposed factions there was a third force, "the autonomists of the moment, mere pretenders or new-born to the creed," and they "had but one thought: patronage." Their real interest was in two "good" departments being assigned to Quebec ministers "to give them a liberal share of the spoils. . . ." They sought an understanding between the two hostile groups and suggested: "Mr. Monk and Mr. Casgrain, with two 'good' portfolios; Mr. Lavergne or Mr. Nantel as Attorney General [sic],<sup>32</sup> and perhaps Mr. Forget, minister without portfolio as a 'moral force' (?)." Several other combinations were suggested as well. After several days of consideration and argument Casgrain and Maréchal were counted out, and Nantel and Pelletier, both acceptable to the Nationalists, were chosen. "Pelletier was the hardest to shove through," wrote Bourassa, "not so much for his nationalism as for his propensity for complicated affairs. Lavergne had a fight to secure his appointment. He could do no less for the most devoted of

30. Bourassa, "Formation of the Cabinet."

31. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 98.

32. Bourassa probably meant Solicitor General, as the Minister of Justice is also Attorney General.



his 'disciples'."33

The word must have gone out from Ottawa that there was determined resistance to Pelletier because Borden was suddenly showered with communications from Quebec City. On October 3rd and 5th telegrams signed by large numbers of men, both French and English, and supporting Pelletier as the minister for that district were despatched.<sup>34</sup> On the 4th one prominent Anglo-Saxon resident of the city wired Borden: "There is evidently an impression being created that L. P. Pelletier is not acceptable to English element in this district. That is quite unfair to him and most incorrect. The Chronicle has strongly advocated his representation in your government and Mr. Wm. Price is also most pronounced in this respect."<sup>35</sup> Price seems to have got wind of the fact that his name was being used in this way and he sent off a message of his own: "Please remember that I stand by memo sent you the other day. Don't take notice of any telegrams purporting that I support any particular man. As long as you choose a man from our district as given in memo, I am satisfied. I have no particular preference."<sup>36</sup> But Price's memorandum gave the distinct impression of a preference for Lavergne and if Pelletier was to represent the Quebec district Lavergne would be excluded.

33. Bourassa, "Formation of the Cabinet."

34. P.A.C., Borden Papers, RLB 2993 (7) and (8).

35. Ibid., RLB 2993 (7), David Watson to Borden, telegram, October 4, 1911.

36. Ibid., OC 47, Price to Borden, telegram, n.d.





That, of course, was the way things turned out but the question remains, did Pelletier win the place by default after Lavergne turned it down? Bourassa, who interrupted the disinfecting process to be in Ottawa during the weekend of September 30th for a consultation with Monk, and who must have been in touch throughout with what was going on in the capital, stated definitely later on: "It is true that Lavergne refused the appointment of Attorney General [sic], and even a portfolio. . . ." <sup>37</sup> On this point and the subject of the selection of the Quebec ministers generally Lavergne himself was reported in the Montreal Star as having given the following account at a meeting in November 1912:

The first names proposed . . . were those of Messrs. Monk, Tellier, and myself. I declined this offer of a portfolio in the Cabinet, and at Mr. Pelletier's request, I did my best to make Mr. Monk accept him in my place. He objected at first. Mr. Forget at the same time was working in favour of Mr. T. Chase Casgrain, but I refused to agree to that choice.

It seemed understood then with the Premier and Mr. Monk that Mr. Pelletier would be the Quebec [district] representative in the Cabinet. Later I learned that Mr. Borden's intentions were to have only two French-Canadian ministers in his Government, and it was at this juncture that I went to Montreal on a special train, paid for by Mr. Cahan, to impress Mr. Borden with the necessity of following the tradition, giving three French-Canadian representatives in the federal Cabinet, which point we finally gained. <sup>38</sup>

Asked in Parliament whether all this was true, Borden replied stiffly: "The statement which relates to alleged confidential

37. Bourassa, "Formation of the Cabinet."

38. House of Commons Debates (1912-13), vol. I, col. 582.



communications is not accurate, so far as the Prime Minister is concerned."<sup>39</sup> There may have been a certain amount of deliberate mischief-making in Lavergne's remarks, which were made shortly after Monk left the Government as a result of continuing disagreement over naval policy; certainly the Nationalists were now bent on embarrassing and harrassing the regime they had helped to elect. However, it is not unreasonable to assume that when the Government was being formed Monk, having hoped in vain to get Bourassa into the cabinet, would aspire to bring in one of Bourassa's chief lieutenants in order to have strong backing at the council table for his stand on the naval issue. He may therefore have proposed such a step to Lavergne. If the latter refused immediately, the matter never reached the stage where Borden would be called upon to make a formal offer.

With Casgrain and Maréchal eliminated, Lavergne (let us assume) having declined an informal invitation from Monk, and Pelletier and Nantel chosen, there remained the case of Rodolphe Forget, who according to Lavergne had been working on Casgrain's behalf. Balked in that effort, Forget became, if he had not been throughout, an aspirant for office himself. According to one report he was offered a portfolio, refused it and "left Ottawa in great anger."<sup>40</sup> A story despatched from Ottawa on Sunday, October 8th to the Montreal Gazette included the news that Forget, "it is now certain, will be minister without portfolio."<sup>41</sup> When the membership of the

39. Ibid.

40. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 98.

41. Gazette, October 9, 1911.



cabinet was published the Montreal Star explained that Forget had declined a place in it for the time being, "as the granting of a certificate to **La Banque Internationale**, in which he has a large interest, will come under consideration by the Cabinet."<sup>42</sup>

Quite clearly it was no part of Monk's desire to have Forget included. On Saturday, October 7th he scribbled a note to Borden from the Rideau Club: "It seems that two members Mondou and Lesperante [sic]<sup>43</sup> want Forget to go in without portfolio. It is for you to decide but it is, as you know, a serious proposition. A message from a nationalist in Montreal informs me that your slate for Quebec was published and gave great satisfaction."<sup>44</sup> It may be noted that inasmuch as a matter of this importance to Monk was one for Borden to decide, Monk had evidently not been given carte blanche in choosing his colleagues.

If Lavergne can be believed, the attempt to get Forget into the Government came to a peak after the Quebec slate had already been agreed upon. That agreement had been reached the day before Monk wrote the note just quoted. Monk was to be Minister of Public Works, Pelletier Secretary of State, and Nantel Minister of Inland Revenue. That, said Lavergne in a letter to Borden he drafted but, it may be, did not send, was the understanding when he and the other members of "the

42. Montreal Star, October 10, 1911.

43. Presumably Monk meant D. O. Lespérance, who had defeated Hon. H. S. Beland in Montmagny. A. A. Mondou was the member for Yamaska.

44. P.A.C., Borden Papers, OC 47, Monk to Borden, "Saturday 1 p.m."





Quebec delegation" who had been in Ottawa left the capital on Friday. But then the Forget complication arose.

When we got to Montreal at the Place Viger hotel. . . Mr. Forget slipped in and held a private caucus, under closed doors, at which I was not present nor invited. I left for Quebec [City], but all the Quebec members present remained.

The following changes were then suggested: Mr. Monk, public works, Mr. Pelletier, postmaster-general, Mr. Nantel, solicitor-general, & Mr. Forget, without portfolio.

I learned these changes only this morning [Sunday]. I cannot say that I can approve of them. First I think it is a diminution [?] from Quebec, by losing one portfolio, taken away from a French Canadian.<sup>45</sup> This opinion seems to receive support here [Quebec City] from the nationalists and prominent conservatives. Secondly, I cannot, & my friends either, approve of the entering [?] in a cabinet of a member of the stock-exchange, president of different companies & trusts. This seems immoral, if that word is not too strong.

Lavergne ended his letter by begging leave "to insist, if not impertinent, on the popularity of the first combination, as agreeable to all," and by suggesting "that the situation could be improved if the solicitor-general was elevated to a seat in the cabinet."<sup>46</sup>

What happened after the meeting at the Place Viger Hotel is very difficult to decide from the scanty available evidence. One gathers from Lavergne's version of the incident that Forget would have been satisfied to enter without portfolio. It may perhaps be inferred from Monk's worried message about the two members who favoured that appointment that it was

45. The office of solicitor general was not then of cabinet rank.

46. P.A.C., Monk Papers, Lavergne to Borden, October 8, 1911, confidential. I have not found this letter in the Borden Papers. This is a rough, handwritten copy which Lavergne may have submitted for Monk's approval or merely for his information. In any event, by the time it would reach either Borden or Monk the arrangements to which Lavergne objected had gone by the boards.



the most that Forget could hope for, that there was no chance of his being put in charge of a department. Indeed the only evidence that he was offered a portfolio seems to be the story in the Star that he had declined it because of his interest in the pending bank certificate application, and conceivably that was invented as a face-saver for Forget and for Hugh Graham, his backer, when the makeup of the Government was announced. If Forget left Ottawa "in great anger" it may have been because Monk, Pelletier and Nantel were to be the only French-Canadian ministers. Perhaps, still angry, he turned up at the Place Viger Hotel to hold his "private caucus" and managed, either on the Friday night or on Saturday morning, to have the changes of which Lavergne complained accepted as a basis of further discussion by a number of those present. Perhaps, too, the harried Borden was then during Saturday bombarded either in person, by messenger or over the telephone from Montreal with objections to those changes, including Monk's few lines from the Rideau Club. This might explain what the latter meant when he wrote to Borden from Montreal on Sunday: "I hope you have been able to enjoy a good night's rest, after all the trouble we gave you yesterday. Our friends were really very grateful for your kindly reception of their requests."<sup>47</sup>

But the best that can be said for all this is that it is an imaginative but not wholly uninformed reconstruction

47. P.A.C., Borden Papers, RLB 2993 (8), Monk to Borden, October 8, 1911.





of events. It may be much worse than that, a tissue of conjecture for which there is no foundation in fact. Borden's comment on the matter is conclusive without being very revealing: "There was a movement in favour of Rodolphe Forget but for certain reasons I thought it inadvisable that he should enter the Government."<sup>48</sup> For whatever reasons, by whatever means, Forget was left out and Monk, Pelletier and Nantel were all given portfolios. None of them, as Bourassa explained to Cahan who had been under a misapprehension on this score, "are, or ever have been, leaders of the Nationalist group. All that can be said is that . . . they have espoused the Nationalists' program and, in consequence, received the support of the Nationalist group."<sup>49</sup> This distinction, however, was too fine for many people to grasp. The three men were widely thought of as Nationalists, outside of Quebec anyway, and their appointments, coupled with the exclusion of their bleu rivals, amounted to a signal victory for the forces of sentiment and power ranged behind Bourassa and Monk.

#### IV The Result

Altogether, counting the two English-speaking choices, Doherty and Perley, Quebec had five ministers (one more than in the last years of the Laurier administration) and four of them held portfolios. No doubt the question of which

48. Henry Borden (ed.), Robert Laird Borden: His Memoirs (New York, 1938), vol. I, p. 331.

49. P.A.C., Bourassa Papers, Bourassa to Cahan, January 25, 1912.



departments they should be given loomed large in the discussions that went on in Ottawa in late September and early October. Bourassa mentioned the desire of some of the politicians that Quebec receive two "good"--that is, large patronage-dispensing--departments and the desire was fulfilled. In this respect, indeed, things turned out better than they would have under the allotments described by Lavergne as having first been decided upon, for Pelletier, instead of becoming Secretary of State, became Postmaster-General and the Post Office, like Monk's Department of Public Works, dispensed patronage on an extensive scale. These two portfolios, along with Justice which was given to Doherty and Inland Revenue which went to Nantel, were ones which very frequently though not invariably had been assigned to Quebec ministers in the past. Although with the exception of Justice none of them was considered to be among the more prestigious posts, there appeared to be no dissatisfaction with them on the part of their recipients.

Also lacking is much evidence of interest on the part of the Quebecers in what portfolios were allotted to ministers from other provinces, or in who those ministers should be. Here again it must be kept in mind that Monk and the others may have expressed opinions about this to Borden orally but there is no reference to it in the available written communications between them. True enough, the French Canadians, it seems, objected to Sam Hughes, which would not be very surprising. One of his friends, J. H. Burnham of Peterborough,



reported to Borden that Hughes had heard of these objections and had said, as Burnham put it, that "if that was the way the F. were going to act then the row might as well come now as any other time."<sup>50</sup> This could hardly have diminished Borden's misgivings about including Hughes on his roster. Also, though this had nothing to do with French-Canadian attitudes, Cahan told Borden after the Government took office that the Bank of Montreal and C.P.R. people thought that Toronto's commercial interests were better represented in the cabinet by G. E. Foster, W. T. White and A. E. Kemp than were those of Montreal by Perley, who was not "closely identified with the commercial life of this City." He had been talking to some of them just that day, Cahan went on, and "they all assure me that you will have their loyal support; yet in reality they hope that as you make changes in Quebec's representation in the Cabinet, you will give the large commercial interests of Montreal a little better show."<sup>51</sup>

One important question that arose almost inevitably from the disagreement over naval matters between the Monk Conservatives and the rest of the party was whether Monk, upon entering the Government and assuming a large degree of responsibility for the choice of the others from Quebec, had received any undertakings from Borden as to future naval policy. In his campaign speeches Monk had repeatedly

50. P.A.C., Borden Papers, RLB 2993 (7), Burnham to Borden, n.d.

51. Ibid., OC A 207, Cahan to Borden, October 12, 1911, confidential.





advocated the repeal of Laurier's Naval Act, as well as a plebiscite before any new measures were embarked upon, and specifically before Parliament was asked to approve a cash contribution to the British navy. Bourassa wrote that Monk "had intimated that his acceptance of a portfolio was subject to the abrogation of the naval act and to popular consultation, by means of a plebiscite, on all new naval policy."<sup>52</sup> Several weeks after the election Pelletier and Lavergne were quoted as telling the audience at a political meeting that the Prime Minister had promised a referendum. Asked in the House whether this was true, Borden answered: "The Prime Minister has made no promise on the navy question, except those which are to be found in his public utterances."<sup>53</sup> Assuredly no such promises would be found there and that, as far as the record goes, was that.

Similarly with regard to educational policy in that portion of the District of Keewatin which was shortly to be annexed to Manitoba there were claims and denials that an understanding had been reached between Borden and Monk. The Quebec Nationalists wanted to be sure that the Roman Catholic population of the area would be exempt from the Manitoba law prohibiting publicly supported separate schools, and even apparently hoped that the whole Manitoba School

52. Bourassa, "Nationalism and the Parties: The Conditions of the 'Autonomist' Ministers. The Keewatin School Question." (13th article in Le Devoir series.)

53. House of Commons Debates (1911-12), vol. I, col. 526.



Question might be re-opened and re-settled in a manner favourable to the Catholic minority. On this subject Bourassa wrote: "He [Monk] did not demand that the Manitoba School question be taken up again through the direct and immediate intervention of the federal power; but it was well understood that the rights of the minorities would be safeguarded in any territory that might be annexed to Manitoba."<sup>54</sup> And once again Lavergne alleged, as Rodolphe Lemieux phrased it in a question in Parliament, that Borden had promised Monk "that the Government would do something . . . for the Catholics of Manitoba and Keewatin." Was this true? Lemieux wanted to know. Borden's denial was unequivocal: "No promises of the character alluded to were made by the Prime Minister."<sup>55</sup>

Of the two questions, naval policy and schools policy in Keewatin, the former loomed very much larger. It was the issue that had brought Monk and Bourassa together for their onslaught on the citadel of Sir Wilfrid Laurier; it was the issue that led in turn to the resignation of Monk from the Government he had helped to bring to power. In 1912, when his demand for a plebiscite was refused and a contribution of money to enlarge the British navy was decided upon as official policy, Monk stepped down. Nantel and Pelletier both remained for a time, until late in 1914 when the former was appointed to the Board of Railway

54. Bourassa, "The Conditions of the 'Autonomist' Ministers. The Keewatin School Question.

55. House of Commons Debates (1912-13), col. I, cols. 590-91.





Commissioners and the latter was made a judge. But with Monk's departure no strong Nationalist influence remained in the cabinet, and there is little reason to believe that those he left behind greatly mourned his going.



## CHAPTER 5

### The Cabinet of 1921

By Frederick W. Gibson

In the general election of the 6th of December, 1921, the government of Arthur Meighen was heavily overthrown. The electorate returned 117 Liberals, 64 Progressives, 50 Conservatives, 3 Labour, and one Independent member. Since the new House of Commons contained 235 members, it thus became the first federal election in which no political party won a majority of parliamentary seats. Nevertheless, the Liberals, lacking but one, were plainly in the best position to form a government, and, there being no possible doubt about the verdict upon the Conservative ministry - they had failed to elect a member in six of the nine provinces, and ten cabinet ministers had suffered personal defeat - Prime Minister Meighen deemed it his immediate duty to offer his resignation.<sup>1</sup>

#### I The Fall and Rise of Mackenzie King

For Mackenzie King the election and the prospective summons to office were the fulfilment of a long and concentrated ambition. It was just over ten years since that equinoctial

1. Roger Graham, Arthur Meighen, vol. II, And Fortune Fled, (Clarke, Irwin and Company, Limited, Toronto, 1965), p. 167. The Conservatives fared much better in the popular vote. They polled a substantial vote in most provinces, and their national total was 972,100, as opposed to 1,297,000 for the Liberals and 769,000 for the Progressives, and the Conservative vote in the prairie provinces exceeded the Liberal vote by 16,000.



day in the autumn of 1911 when King, then a junior minister of the Crown, found his career abruptly checked by the smashing defeat which finally overwhelmed the administration of Sir Wilfrid Laurier. In King's case, it had been a double misfortune. Not only did he forfeit his portfolio, the minor Department of Labour, but he was unable to salvage his parliamentary seat, and in the bleak aftermath of the general defeat, when there were few safe Liberal seats, at least in Ontario, King's claims had not been considered sufficiently important for the Liberal chieftains to find one for him. He was thus turned out of Parliament at a time when his political reputation was still far from established (he was 37 in 1911 and he had served for only two years in the House of Commons) and when possession of a seat on the then greatly attenuated Opposition front bench would have given abundant opportunity to develop his powers and advance rapidly up the ranks of the Liberal leadership. It was a bitter disappointment and its edge was in no way blunted when arrangements were deliberately made, and at the highest level of the Liberal hierarchy, to afford precisely this opportunity to another and only slightly less junior ex-minister from Ontario, George P. Graham.

For a time, Mackenzie King struggled to keep a foothold on the Liberal ladder. He continued to live in the national capital; he took on a succession of publicity and organization chores for his party; and he endeavoured in these and other ways to keep his name before the attention of Sir Wilfrid





Laurier and the Liberal party. But nothing came of these various expedients and, at length, in August 1914, King abandoned them in favour of less casual employment. The post he chose, head of the Industrial Relations Department of the Rockefeller Foundation, undoubtedly offered responsible work in the main field of his professional training and experience, but it had the distinct disadvantage of taking him away from Ottawa for months at a time and of carrying him even farther out of the mainstream of Canadian public life. It was thus seen as a distraction and Mackenzie King refused to be permanently diverted.

From the beginning, the goal of Mackenzie King had been, quite simply and plainly, the Prime Ministership of Canada. He had never lost sight of it nor long doubted that one day the prize would be his. In the spring of 1913, fifteen months before he began work with the Rockefeller Foundation, he obtained the Liberal nomination in North York and before the Great War was over it became clear that in this, as in everything else he had done since the 21st of September 1911, King had been essentially biding his time. In 1917 his time came. In that year, a military and political crisis burst upon Canada. The Conservative government of Sir Robert Borden proposed a measure of conscription and invited Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his colleagues to join them in a coalition for the implementation of conscription, and, in general, the more vigorous prosecution of the war. Laurier refused, and with



his refusal the Liberal party broke apart. One large and important section supported conscription and joined the Conservatives in Union Government; the remainder stayed with Laurier in opposition. A general election was called for December 1917 and in that election Mackenzie King ran in North York as a Laurier Liberal. He was beaten, but the defeat in North York was the decisive turning point in his political career. For it was the decision to make the fight for Laurier and to make in the province of Ontario, where only one other of Laurier's surviving cabinet colleagues, Charles Murphy, did the same, that established Mackenzie King, once and for all, in the front rank of the Liberal party. By this single act, he won for himself what he had never had before - a large and powerful following within his party, including, above all, the Quebec Liberals who then represented the overwhelming opinion of French Canada. It was this body of support, represented in great strength at the National Liberal Convention called, a year and a half later, to choose a successor to the "martyred Laurier", which turned aside the aspirations of two prominent conscriptionist Liberals, W. S. Fielding and George Graham, and chose, instead, Mackenzie King. The Liberal tide which King had seized at its absolute ebb in the autumn of 1917 he rode on to fortune in the autumn of 1921. By that time, the Union Government had disintegrated and its unfortunate legatee, the Meighen administration, had run its short and melancholy course





into the worst electoral defeat that the Conservative party had experienced. The fall and rise of Mackenzie King was at last completed.

## II The Liberal Cabinet Potential in 1921

In 1921, ten years had elapsed since a Liberal government had held office of Ottawa. And in that momentous decade - the most turbulent in Canadian political history since the 1860's - sweeping changes had occurred in the Liberal high command from which a cabinet could be drawn. Sir Wilfrid Laurier was dead and so were many, though not all, of the leading figures of the Laurier era. Others had moved off the political stage, either into retirement or to the bench or to other posts of a non-political character. In addition to these normal causes of attrition, there were others peculiar to the Great War period. The conscription crisis made a great upheaval in the Liberal party. Some of the most respected of the Liberal elder statesman and many of the most promising of the younger generation had broken with Laurier and linked their fortunes, in varying degrees, with Union Government. After the war some Liberal Unionists returned to their old allegiance but others did not. Of the latter, a few found a permanent home within the reorganized Conservative party; some retired from public life; others, these principally in the prairie provinces and rural Ontario, went off on a new political orientation altogether; and there were still others, who found themselves temporarily stranded in a kind



of political no man's land. For the split of 1917 had been everywhere attended by great bitterness on both sides, and, although, in the post-war years, first Laurier and then Mackenzie King placed "a light in the window" to welcome back the departed brethren, feelings still ran high and division persisted. In many quarters, notably in Nova Scotia, in Ontario and in Manitoba, there were not a few Unionist-Liberals who continued to despise the "Laurier rump", and there were at least as many Laurier-Liberals who cherished a deep hatred for the "betrayers of Laurier" and who were determined that they should receive no further preferment or recognition from the Liberal party. Inevitably it would take time - it took a further ten years - to effect a general reconciliation, and meanwhile the lingering acrimony was bound to aggravate the problems of Liberal leadership, including the problem of forming a Liberal government at Ottawa. In every province except Quebec the composition of the federal Liberal leadership corps had been greatly altered, and in each of these eight provinces it had been seriously weakened in the process.

In the Atlantic provinces one veteran still towered over the field. Fifteen years as Minister of Finance in the Laurier administration had elevated William Stevens Fielding to an eminence within the Liberal party second only to Laurier and, while the war decade had dimmed the lustre of his reputation, it was by no means extinguished. Fielding



and his reciprocity agreement had been blamed for the 1911 defeat and he had made additional enemies by supporting conscription and Union Government. Yet so great was his prestige as a national figure that he came within an ace of winning the Liberal leadership in 1919. In that contest his age (he was 71) and his wartime record told against him, but these considerations could not possibly exclude him from cabinet office in 1921. For the preceding year and a half he had easily borne a large share of the Liberal leadership in the House of Commons, and the 1921 election placed him at the head of a solid phalanx of Liberal members from Nova Scotia. Fielding's appointment to the cabinet was a foregone conclusion; his return to his old portfolio only slightly less certain.

Aside from Fielding, however, there was no one else of remotely comparable stature - there had not been in Nova Scotia since the death of Sir Frederick Borden in 1914. Yet Nova Scotia, in every Dominion cabinet since 1867, had invariably been represented by two ministers, and December 1921, on the morrow of an election in which the Liberal party captured for the first time every seat in the province, was a singularly awkward moment to break the tradition. If the tradition were to be preserved, there were, among the "solid sixteen", three possibilities. A. K. Maclean was acceptable on grounds of ability and experience, but he had been a minister without portfolio in Union Government, and,





though he returned to the Liberal fold after the war, it would be very difficult in 1921 to take into the cabinet two Unionist Liberals from Nova Scotia. This was not a bar to the aspirations of D. D. McKenzie: in fifteen years in the House of Commons he had never wavered in fidelity to his leader and, for a few months in 1919 following Laurier's death, he had enjoyed solitary eminence as temporary leader; the real objection to McKenzie was that he was a narrow-minded, cantankerous man who could not be expected to bring strength to a national government. Of E. M. Macdonald, the final possibility, all that could be said was that no businessman need tremble from his presence in the Council chamber and that he had served faithfully in the House of Commons for thirteen unbroken years.

The New Brunswick crop of potential ministers was even scantier. After the resignation of Andrew Blair from the Laurier cabinet in 1903 the direction of federal Liberal affairs in the province had passed from one indifferent minister to another, and the last of these, William Pugsley, was now Lieutenant-Governor. Frank B. Carvell, the solitary Liberal of genuine promise to come out of the Maritimes during the war, was equally out of the running. Carvell had made a reputation as a fierce critic of the Borden government, but his powerful convictions on conscription had swept him into Union Government, and then, when the tide receded, had left him high and dry in the Chairmanship



of the Board of Railway Commissioners. With the removal of Carvell's hand, New Brunswick Liberals fell to quarreling among themselves, and, as a result, they only succeeded in electing five candidates out of a possible eleven in 1921. None of the five was an obvious cabinet choice. Two were French Canadians whose pleasing manners, modest abilities, and records of long service in the House of Commons almost exactly cancelled out each other's claims, leaving as the only alternative A. B. Copp, a Sackville lawyer. Copp was a dignified and cooperative politician who had made no influential enemies in the course of a varied legislative career; his hopes for preferment rested on this and on the further fact that his province had not hitherto been denied representation in any Dominion cabinet.

No politician - Liberal or Conservative - had ever arisen in Prince Edward Island to fill the gap left by the appointment of Sir Louis Davies to the Supreme Court of Canada in 1901, and since that date the province had gone unrepresented in the federal cabinet. Although the 1921 election made no striking improvement in the situation, it was a fact that the Island had, for the first time since 1887, elected only Liberal candidates to the House of Commons, and Mackenzie King felt an additional obligation to the Island Liberals for their generosity in finding him a seat in 1919. John E. Sinclair, one of the members-elect, was a prosperous young farmer in good standing whose modest political experience and talent might be made into a suitable instrument of





recognition if he were taken into the cabinet but given nothing very complicated to do.

The federal Liberal party in the Atlantic provinces thus presented the appearance of a great many Indians with but one chief, and he a man of seventy-three. In the central provinces the Liberal position was decidedly mixed: weak in Ontario for over a decade, it was supremely strong in Quebec.

In the Province of Quebec, the long Liberal ascendancy, accomplished by Laurier and temporarily dislodged by Henri Bourassa and the Nationalist upsurge in 1911, was now fully restored. The battle over conscription had rallied the entire French-Canadian community to the standard of Laurier and his stricken party as the only possible instrument of constitutional protest, and, so long as the memory of that struggle remained fresh, the heirs of Laurier were to occupy an impregnable position in their province. In the 1921 election the Quebec Liberals, even more decisively than their associates in Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island, drove all before them and, for the first time since Confederation, gained every seat in the province. The Quebec contingent, a solid bloc of sixty-five members reinforced by a dozen Senators, contained proven and potential cabinet ministers aplenty.

Laurier, of course, was gone, and with him Tarte and Geoffrion and Sydney Fisher and most of their generation. Of the survivors, L. P. Brodeur was on the Supreme Court of Canada and Sir Charles Fitzpatrick was Lieutenant-Governor of the province. Senator Raoul Dandurand, however,



was still available, and his twenty-three years in the Senate - four of them as its Speaker - combined with his general ability and continuing vigour, made him at sixty an obvious candidate for the leadership of the government forces in the Upper Chamber, a post which usually carried with it cabinet rank.

In the House of Commons there were three seasoned French-Canadian leaders who had been promoted, early in life but late in the history of the Laurier government, to ministerial office and who now belonged to the old guard of Laurier liberalism; they had all remained prominent, in varying degrees, in opposition and each was still in the prime of life. Rodolphe Lemieux, first in parliamentary ability and in the length and variety of his cabinet experience, had entered Parliament in 1896, and, after Henri Bourassa stepped aside, he had been brought forward rapidly and given in succession the portfolios of Solicitor General, Postmaster General, and Marine and Fisheries. Henri S. Beland, a less conspicuous figure in every way, had succeeded Lemieux as Postmaster General for a few weeks in 1911; he too had given effective service in opposition, though his parliamentary career had been broken by three years internment as a prisoner of war in Germany. The oldest and by far the most attractive of the three was the member for Trois Rivières, Jacques Bureau. A blithe and buoyant sprite of a man, Bureau had been for over twenty years one of the most popular members



of the Commons, and while there had been nothing remarkable about his tenure as Laurier's Solicitor General in succession to Lemieux, he had repeatedly, out of his inexhaustible wit and optimism, entertained the Liberals in office and lifted them in opposition. Standing slightly outside this circle of the old guard, there was Georges H. Boivin, an able and attractive new man, who had risen to the Deputy Speakership within a year of his election to Parliament in 1917; but Boivin's prospects of promotion to a Liberal cabinet were dimmed by the fact that he was known to have been negotiating with Arthur Meighen, in the spring of 1921, in response to the latter's offer of a cabinet post.<sup>2</sup>

None of these men, however, had stepped into the spacious vacancy in the politics of Quebec left by the death of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, and, in fact, the question of who was to be his successor as the principal Liberal spokesman of French Canada was still unsettled. Among the federal parliamentary group the one who came the closest was Ernest Lapointe. Lapointe had come into Parliament in 1904, a young lawyer from Kamouraska county with a farming background and no influential connections. Lacking them and lacking, too, the vivacity and the cultivated eloquence of Bourassa and Lemieux, his progress was slower and he did not attain cabinet rank during the Laurier regime. Lapointe possessed, however, more durable qualities: he was loyal, dependable and, above all, teachable, and it was one of Jacques Bureau's principal

2. Graham, op. cit., vol. II, p.





services to his party that he took the young Lapointe under his wing, and in a thousand kindly ways guided him through the intricacies of parliamentary procedure, Quebec politics and the English language. Under this tutelage and with encouragement from Laurier, Lapointe's political education advanced, and, as the Liberals moved through the prolonged and turbulent period of opposition, his steadiness and tenacity shone more brightly. In 1916, he stepped briefly into national prominence in the debate over the Ontario bilingual schools question; and in the 1919 Liberal Convention, where his influence over the Quebec caucus was a vital factor in focussing French-Canadian preferences on the choice of Mackenzie King, it was evident that Lapointe had attained a definite prominence among the Quebec Liberal leaders, a prominence which made it appear quite suitable when he switched constituencies and took over Quebec East, Sir Wilfrid Laurier's old seat. And yet in 1921 it was still true that Lapointe had not fully established his position as the chief of Quebec Liberals and in that year he was confronted with a new and exceedingly formidable rival on the flank.

Sir Lomer Gouin was by all odds the most impressive parliamentary recruit whom the 1921 election brought forth. His whole life hitherto had been spent in the law and politics of Quebec, and in both spheres he had gone about as far as anyone could go. He was a former batonnier-general of the provincial bar; his law firm was closely connected with several of the largest business enterprises in Montreal; and, for



fifteen years, he had been an exceedingly forceful and successful Premier of the Province. In 1920, at the age of 59, he resigned from the provincial government and in 1921 he was elected to Parliament for the Montreal division of Laurier-Outremont, an accomplishment which he undoubtedly considered as no more than a stepping-stone to another summit. For Gouin, in addition to his other qualifications, was a masterful and domineering personality, used to command and fairly breathing authority, and it is unthinkable that he should have left the provincial premiership for a seat on the back benches of the House of Commons or for any political office other than one of acknowledged pre-eminence among French-Canadian Liberals in federal politics. Gouin and Lapointe had clashed briefly in the behind-the-scenes manoeuvring at the Liberal Convention in 1919; the cabinet formation of 1921 was to be their second and major encounter.

There were, in addition to this array of French-Canadian cabinet prospects, three aspirants for the cabinet appointment which custom had assigned (sometimes it had been two) to the English-speaking population of Quebec. One of them, Walter Mitchell, was a recent transfer from the provincial field, and in this respect, as well as in his background and outlook on public issues, he bore a striking resemblance to Sir Lomer Gouin. A Montreal lawyer, Mitchell had made his way rapidly up the professional and business world of





that city into the government of the province: he had been for six years provincial treasurer in the Gouin administration, a post which he filled to the entire satisfaction of the business community and which he left in November 1921 to become, a fortnight later, the member of Parliament for St. Antoine, the first Liberal ever to represent that riding. Although neither his career nor his presumptions soared quite so high as did those of his senior colleague, Mitchell was an unusually able and ambitious man whose sights, like Gouin's, were naturally set on the cabinet. One distinct alternative to Mitchell was Andrew McMaster, also a Montreal lawyer but in other ways a quite different public man. McMaster was a Cobdenite Liberal of very independent views, and in the course of four years as the member for Brome he had made a strong impression by force of character and by his unremitting assault upon the system of protective tariffs. Standing almost at midpoint between these two on issues of economic policy was a third possibility, James A. Robb, a flour miller and moderate protectionist from Huntingdon. Robb thus appeared in the advantageous role of a compromise candidate for cabinet appointment, and his claims were further enhanced by a record of four years of sagacious and persuasive service as Chief Liberal Whip in the House of Commons.

The Liberal party in Quebec was unique in the strength of its cabinet potential. There was a plenitude of candidates - more in fact, than there were posts to go round, if the



province was to receive anything like its customary share. Competition was bound to be keen, pressure on the Prime Minister intense, and he would have his work cut out to eliminate in such a way as to do the least damage to party unity in the province and to the government's position in the country as a whole.

In Ontario and even more in the provinces of the west, this was not the problem. Nowhere in that great expanse from the Ottawa River to the Pacific, was there a goodly harvest awaiting a federal liberal cabinet-maker. The Liberal party in Ontario had fallen upon lean times. Cartwright, Paterson and Scott - venerable even in the pre-war era of Liberal ascendancy - were all dead. Three others, Sir William Mulock, Sir Allen Aylesworth, and C. S. Hyman, were still living, but Mulock was on the High Court of Ontario, and Aylesworth and Hyman had been contentedly in retirement since 1911. Of the surviving Ontario members of the Laurier cabinet, this left, besides Mackenzie King, only two, George Graham and Charles Murphy, actively in public life. Murphy, in addition to experience, possessed honesty and energy - he could be relied on to be a very energetic spokesman for the Irish Catholic vote - but he was also an unforgiving and contumelious individual, a prey to ferocious animosities, and likely to prove an exceedingly difficult cabinet colleague. Graham, with an even longer and more varied experience - he had served in the government of Ontario before becoming



federal minister of Railways and Canals - was, in other respects, very different from Murphy. A shrewd and genial man of surpassing good-humour, Graham had laughed and joked his way into the affections of countless men. His wartime record was ambiguous (he voted for conscription but declined to join Union Government and then stood aside from the wartime election), but it did not prevent him from making a quite respectable run for the leadership in 1919. His weaknesses were a timidity in the face of great issues and a tendency to think of politics solely in terms of rewarding friends and organizing followers; his misfortune, in 1921, was that for several years before 1917 he and his friends had stood in Mackenzie King's light in the province of Ontario. Both Graham and Murphy were, in fact, senior to King in age and in cabinet experience; both had been prominent in the Liberal opposition at Ottawa after 1911; both were re-elected in 1921; and Mackenzie King disliked the pair of them. Still, their claims could not lightly be set aside if only because there were so few available alternatives and because Ontario had never had fewer than four ministers in the federal cabinet. To be sure, there were, among the score of Ontario Liberal members, one or two promising newcomers like Euler of North Waterloo and Malcolm of North Bruce, but they would require a period of apprenticeship before they could be considered for cabinet posts. And, finally, there was T. A. Low, a small businessman and promoter from Renfrew, who had been in Parliament before the war and in whom King saw, or thought he saw, the makings





of a political organizer.

There were, in fact, only two Ontario Liberals of high ability whom the war years had brought into federal politics. One of them, Newton W. Rowell, a man of outstanding intellect, had left the provincial leadership to become President of the Privy Council in the Union Government; but Rowell had become, more than any other Unionist Liberal, anathema to Laurier Liberals and he was, for that reason, unavailable. The other was W. C. Kennedy, an Irish Catholic. Kennedy, the president of a private utility company and a popular ex-mayor of Windsor, was scarcely a national figure, but he was the nearest thing to a prominent businessman in politics whom the Liberals, outside of Quebec, could produce in 1921. He had come into the House of Commons as a Laurier Liberal in 1917 and had made his mark on the opposition benches; Mackenzie King had been so favourably impressed that, three months before the 1921 election, he had offered Kennedy a portfolio so as to make sure that he ran. Aside from Kennedy, there were no new men with strong claims, and this meant, especially if Graham or Murphy were to be jettisoned, that someone would have to be found outside the ranks of official Liberalism in Ontario. The most likely recruit was James Murdock of Toronto, a prominent and widely respected trade union officer, whom Mackenzie King had drawn into the election campaign with the promise of a portfolio; but Murdock, unfortunately, was now a defeated candidate.



It was in the provinces west of the Great Lakes, however, that the war and postwar years had caused the most sweeping changes in the Liberal leadership, leaving it, in fact, almost entirely dismantled. William Templeman was gone from British Columbia, and since his death the federal interests of the party had been in the care of Hewitt Bostock, Liberal leader in the Senate. None of the three British Columbian Liberals elected in 1921 was of cabinet calibre. On the prairies, there had never been a Liberal with the ability or the energy or the commanding authority of Clifford Sifton, but after his resignation from the federal cabinet in 1905, a new generation of leaders had emerged through farmer organizations and provincial politics. The members of this group which included J. A. Calder, T. A. Crerar, Arthur Sifton and W. M. Martin, were almost all of them Liberals, but such was the power of the conscription issue that they were, with few exceptions, swept up into the campaign for Union Government, and in the postwar years the one who remained most active in federal politics, T. A. Crerar, left the federal department of Agriculture to take up the leadership of a new political movement. The wave of Unionism was followed by a wave of Progressivism, and under the force of these successive disturbances the Liberal party on the Prairies was torn from its moorings, and, both in federal and provincial politics, all but completely overwhelmed. In the federal election of 1921 not a single Liberal was elected in Alberta, and Frank Oliver, the only survivor of the Laurier era, went down with the rest.





The sole Liberal elected in Saskatchewan, W. R. Motherwell, a veteran homesteader and provincial minister of Agriculture, was undoubtedly of cabinet stature, but, like Oliver in Alberta, he had just concluded a bitter campaign against the new farmers movement and his appointment to the federal cabinet would bring little, if any, farm support to the government. In Manitoba two Liberals were elected, both in Winnipeg ridings, but by far the more promising of the two, A. B. Hudson, a former Attorney-General of the province, had run as an Independent-Liberal, choosing this way of signifying his sympathy with the cause of Progressivism and his desire to keep free of embarrassing entanglements with official Liberalism. In the conditions of post-war Canada, the Liberal party on the prairies, no less than the Conservative, had virtually ceased to exist.

### III Mackenzie King's Plans and Principles of Cabinet-Making

The general election of 1921 took place on December the 6th, a Tuesday. Mackenzie King took the next day off and on Thursday he turned to the problem of forming a government. From that moment until the afternoon of the 29th, just three weeks later, when his administration took office, King's energies were fully engaged in this single task.

The first three days were spent in taking stock and laying plans. The salient feature of Liberal cabinet potential, as it presented itself to Mackenzie King, was the exceedingly lopsided character of its distribution



throughout the country; and this feature underscored, in a peculiarly forceful and urgent manner, the regional strengths and weaknesses of the Liberal party in the aftermath of World War I. Supremely powerful in Quebec, very strong in the Maritime provinces in electoral support, if not in leadership, the Liberals were very much weaker everywhere west of the Ottawa River. They had won only a quarter of the seats in Ontario and British Columbia (21 out of 82 in Ontario and 3 out of 13 in British Columbia), and out on the prairies, traditionally an area of pronounced Liberal strength, the Liberal party, as an organized force in federal politics, was in almost total eclipse. The essence of the predicament was that political recovery from wartime and postwar damage was by no means complete, and that, in the meantime, the Liberal party was not a genuinely representative national party, certainly not in the sense that it had been before the war or that the Conservative party was in the post-Confederation era.

One cause of the difficulty was, of course, the bitter cleavage which the conscription issue had made in Liberal ranks in all the English-speaking provinces. And yet, ever since the federal Convention of 1919, the task of reconciliation had been in hand, and the 1921 election returns were proof that, at least in the Maritimes and in scattered parts of Ontario, definite progress had been made. Nothing of the kind had occurred, however, in most of rural Ontario or



in the Prairie West, and in this failure resided the second and more compelling reason for the continuing weakness of the Liberal party. In these two areas the farmers of Canada, in revolt against the business interests of the country and against the Conservative and Liberal parties which they considered to be tools of business, had cut adrift from old allegiances and launched upon a political venture of their own. The movement of united farmers, organized on a local and provincial basis and animated by all the fervent indignation of an evangelical crusade, was a immediate and smashing success at the polls. Six months after the armistice the farmers turned out a Conservative government in Ontario and installed E. C. Drury, a former Liberal, in the premiership at the head of a Farmer-Labor Administration; in 1921 the farmers accomplished a similar feat in Alberta; and subsequently, in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Liberal governments were only narrowly to avert the same fate, the former by a severance of all ties with the federal party, the latter by the device of a Progressive-Liberal coalition. Fired by their provincial conquests and by victory in seven federal by-elections, the farmers movement drove on into federal politics, and in the 1921 election the Progressive Party, led by T. A. Crerar, became the most successful third party in federal political history, sweeping the prairie provinces virtually clean with





38 out of a possible 43 seats, capturing 24 in Ontario, and adding one from British Columbia and one from New Brunswick to make a total coup of 64 seats, exactly 14 more than the Conservative total for the whole of Canada.

The effect on the Conservative party was to complete the ruin of the Meighen government; the effect on the Liberal party was only less unfortunate. It was not simply that the Liberals were denied a mathematical majority - and even more emphatically, a clear working majority - in the House of Commons. This was an embarrassing, but not necessarily a paralyzing, consequence, since a Liberal government could expect support from the Independent member, and there was already reason to believe that two Ontario Progressives would also be helpful.<sup>3</sup> Much more serious was the fact that the Progressive sweep on the prairies denied the Liberal leader the opportunity to construct out of his following in Parliament a fully representative cabinet and barred the door to the restoration of the Liberal party as an effective national party.

To Mackenzie King it was a distinctly disappointing, though

3. Mackenzie King Papers, G.H.O. Thomas to King, 12 December, 1921, and Raoul Dandurand to King, 12 December, 1921.



not a surprising, feature of the election.<sup>4</sup> He had, in fact, foreseen the danger and for more than a year he had been trying to forestall it, to head off the farmers' revolt, and to bring its leaders into some kind of working combination with the Liberals. From the beginning King viewed the farmer and labor movements as ephemeral manifestations of liberalism which should be absorbed into the Liberal party. He had therefore endeavoured, while in opposition, to prevent Liberals and Farmers from being drawn into open conflict with each other, both in the House of Commons and in federal by-elections. On three separate occasions between November 1920 and February 1921, he had proposed, first to Crerar and then to Drury, an open coalition of Liberals and Progressives to be worked out before a general election so that the two groups could present a united front against the government and avoid the perils of three-cornered contests in the constituencies.

The response of the Farmer leaders had been very cool. They distrusted King's sincerity, they feared that such an arrangement would be unacceptable to their following--that it would indeed, split the farmers' movement and dissipate

4. Mackenzie King had been certain, at least six months before the election, that the government would be defeated, but he had never counted on a clear Liberal majority: in mid-September he estimated that the Liberals would take from 112 to 116 seats, and on election eve his prediction was 110 to 115. The Progressives, on the other hand, did not do as well as their leaders and some of their friends had predicted: Crerar was counting on a Progressive total of at least 75 to 80 and possibly 90 seats; other predictions from this quarter ran as high as 100.





its strength at a time when it was very definitely on the rise - and they preferred to wait until after the election, when they full expected to be in a very powerful bargaining position. In consequence, all King's approaches had failed, and the Liberals were drawn into a fight against Progressive as well as Conservative candidates. The campaign proved to be a heated one and unavoidably feelings were aroused which further clouded the prospects of a Liberal-Progressive alliance. King himself not only reversed his earlier decision in favour of a coalition but actually committed himself publicly against the idea on at least two occasions during the campaign and in his first post-election statement to the press. This did not mean, however, that he had given up all thought of reconciliation. Despite a mounting irritation with the Progressive leaders, King was still in sympathy with the farmers movement, and, besides, the plain and stubborn fact remained that, until the Progressives or the body of opinion which they represented could be won over, the position of the Liberal Party in Parliament and in the country would be precarious, and, so long as this was true, King's own future as a party leader was bound to be uncertain.

For Mackenzie King, therefore, it was not a question of whether to effect a reconciliation with the organized farmers of Canada but only of when and how, and in the aftermath of the election he thought he saw answers to



these questions. Able for the first time to offer the Progressive leaders office and power, and with these the opportunity to participate in decisions of the federal government on all those issues of economic policy which were of such urgent concern to the farmers movement, King decided to invite them into his government. It was a vitally important decision, and it shaped the entire course of cabinet formation in December 1921.

The invitation, if were to succeed, would not only have to be made attractive to the Progressives but would have to carry the support of the Liberal party in the House of Commons. The Liberal parliamentary group, aside from the handful from the four western provinces, was made up of three elements: 25 members from the Maritime provinces, 21 from Ontario, and the full complement of 65 Quebec members. Mackenzie King did not expect much objection from the Maritimes - and certainly not if Fielding was prepared to endorse the move - but he could not be as confident about the two other components. Within the short space of two years the Liberal party in Ontario had been beaten by the farmers movement in two general elections - one provincial, the other federal - and in 1921 there were many Ontario Liberals, especially in the western party of the province, who were in no mood for generous treatment of an antagonist who had prevented them, as they felt, from capitalizing fully on the prevalent anti-



Conservative feeling. On the other hand, Ontario Liberals had cut such a consistently poor figure in every election for more than a decade that they were in no position to dominate the national councils of their party. Much more to be feared was any serious opposition from Quebec. For in 1921 the province of Quebec, breaking every precedent, had voted solidly Liberal, and its 65 members now constituted - also for the first time since Confederation - a majority of the parliamentary party out of which the government of Canada would be formed. The Quebec Liberals were thus in a position of very great strength; their support of any major piece of Liberal policy or strategy affecting their interests was indispensable; and on the point of taking the Progressive leaders into the government that support could not simply be taken for granted.

Yet if the danger of opposition from Quebec had to be taken seriously, it was not likely to come equally from all quarters of the province. For the traditional regionalism of Quebec politics persisted well into the twentieth century, and in 1921 the Liberal party in the province, superficially a monolithic bloc, was in fact, divided into two quite definite groups, and the division, corresponding broadly to the distinction between the districts of Quebec and Montreal, was reflected not only in the presence of two groups of federal leaders but in differences of attitude and temper on a wide variety





of public questions, including those economic issues which were relevant to any rapprochement between the federal Liberal party and the organized farmers of Ontario and western Canada.

The Quebec district group, led by Ernest Lapointe and his associates Bureau and Beland, was firmly based on the traditional farming and professional interests of French Canada, and its views on the tariff and other economic questions were moderate and sufficiently flexible to allow of considerable accommodation with the farmers. The Montreal Liberals, by contrast, were intimately associated with the great financial, transportation and industrial enterprises of that city, and in the circumstances of post-war Canada the leaders of the Montreal business community were in an apprehensive and unaccommodating mood. Their fears, aroused by the uncertainties of the transition from a war to a peace economy, were aggravated by contemporary eruptions of social discontent and political protest, and not least by the farmers revolt, a phenomenon which was viewed in Montreal as a dangerous assault on the protective tariff and the whole associated system of national economic policies with which the prosperity of the metropolis was inseparably connected.

In this unwelcome atmosphere of economic change and political instability the leaders of Montreal business were by no means certain of where to turn for the protection



of their interests in federal politics. The Conservative party, though safe as always on the tariff, had forfeited their confidence as a result of the railway policy of the Borden and Meighen administrations. The federal Liberals, though much less heavily committed to dangerous experiments in public ownership of transport, had never been entirely reliable on trade policy, and their new leader was an unknown quantity as Prime Minister. On both counts Montreal business found the combination of the new Liberal platform, with its promise of specific and sweeping tariff reductions, and Mackenzie King's pre-election gestures to the farmers less than reassuring. The two politicians who, above all others, commanded the confidence of Montreal business leaders were the Premier of Quebec, Sir Lomer Gouin, and his Provincial Treasurer, Walter Mitchell, and it was upon this pair and their advancement at Ottawa that they placed their main reliance.

Mackenzie King, faced with these two rival factions, had leaned toward the Quebec group and particularly toward Ernest Lapointe whom he brought forward into a position of special prominence. Within two months of his election to the party leadership King told Lapointe that he would want him in any Liberal administration at Ottawa, and in the succeeding two years he selected Lapointe more frequently than any other politician, English or French,





to accompany him on a series of speaking tours throughout the country. In September 1921, within a week of the announcement of the election, King offered Lapointe his choice of any portfolio in a Liberal government, and said that he would look first to him in any negotiations for the formation of a cabinet. At the same time, however, King did not fail to give encouragement to the Montreal group. Once the Progressive leaders had turned down his pre-election overtures for a coalition, it was plain that the Liberals would need all the election help they could get, including the financial support of the City of Montreal. To obtain it, King, at the urging of Rodolphe Lemieux and Raoul Dandurand, had invited Sir Lomer Gouin to move into the federal field, and offered him the Liberal leadership in the Senate and a place in the government without portfolio. With the same objective in view, King deliberately played down, during the campaign, the tariff and railway issues which divided Montreal so sharply from the farmers movement.

Yet Mackenzie King's pre-election encouragement of the Montreal Liberals was based on immediate political necessities rather than genuine sympathy. King distrusted the political influence of business and, in the case of the Montrealers, he sensed that what they wanted was not simply a share of political power but full control of a federal Liberal administration. This he was determined



to prevent both because a government controlled from Montreal would frustrate the reconstruction of the Liberal party in the agrarian sections of the country and because, as a general principle, he did not want any single interest to dominate a government of his making. Moreover, King saw in the postwar manoeuvres of Montreal business and its political allies a serious threat to his own position as party leader. His suspicions had been excited during the months preceding the election by a series of rumours and reports to the effect that an alliance of protectionist Liberals and Conservatives was being spawned in Montreal. In March 1921 the Chief Liberal whip told King that Georges Boivin, the Deputy-Speaker, had been pressed to join the Meighen government and that two other French-Canadian Liberal members were also to be approached. Then, late in September, while he was campaigning in the Maritimes, King heard from another source that a meeting had taken place in Montreal between leading men of both parties, including Prime Minister Meighen, Sir Lomer Gouin and Lord Atholstan, of the Montreal Star, at which the terms of an alliance had been worked out. Whether, in fact, these rumours were true, it is certain that Mackenzie King took them seriously. He considered for a time the idea of withdrawing from North York in favour of a safe seat in Prince Edward Island; he made it plain that he did not want either Gouin or Rodolphe Lemieux



(whom he also suspected of being party to the conspiracy) to campaign in Ontario; and he took the even more unusual step of asking both these men for public expressions of loyalty to his leadership.<sup>5</sup>

The election eased this "danger" by returning Mackenzie King in North York at the head of the largest party in the House of Commons and with the prime ministership within his grasp, but it did not wholly remove his apprehensions. The Liberals plainly lacked a secure parliamentary footing, and King feared that, if his government should stumble from one narrow escape to another in the House and thence, perhaps, to humiliating defeat, intrigues against his leadership would revive and would overthrow him. It was a most disturbing possibility, and, as he reflected on the problems of cabinet formation, King saw in it an additional argument for a new approach to the farmers movement. If the Progressive leaders could be brought into his government, and if their parliamentary supporters could steadily be melded with the Liberals, the danger of a government defeat would be greatly diminished, his own position correspondingly strengthened, and a large step taken toward the complete

5. King obtained the requested endorsement from Lemieux whose letter to King was published in the Montreal Gazette of December 3rd, 1921. All that King got from Gouin was a private assurance, delivered by S. W. Jacobs of Montreal, to the effect that he endorsed the Lemieux letter.





restoration of the Liberal party. Yet, somehow, this would have to be done in such a way as not to excite serious opposition within his own party, and especially among the high protectionist Montreal wing of the Quebec Liberals. It was the imperative need to avoid this consequence that enhanced the importance of Ernest Lapointe both as a counter-weight to the influence and aspirations of Gouin and as the one man who might be able to keep the main body of French-Canadian Liberals in line. To gather in the Progressives with one hand and to elevate Lapointe to paramountcy in Quebec with the other - these became the two central and related elements in Mackenzie King's ambitious strategy for the formation of a government in 1921.

On the afternoon of Thursday, December 8th, two days after the election, Mackenzie King called in Andrew Haydon, the national organizer of the Liberal party, and outlined his plans. His principal aim was a "united Canada", and he proposed to form a cabinet which represented farmers, labor, soldiers, businessmen and the professions and which struck a balance between Protestants and Catholics. An alliance with the farming community he regarded as an essential foundation for the future, and he was determined not to leave the west in isolation from his government. He had also decided to reduce the cabinet from 21 (the size of the Meighen cabinet before the election) to 16, and to make the provinces the basis of representation



according to the number of parliamentary seats to which each province was entitled, without denying recognition to any province - a method of representation which led him to assign Ontario four ministers in addition to the Prime Minister, Quebec four and the Solicitor General (not of the cabinet), and each of the other provinces a single minister. Finally, he wanted to keep all portfolios out of the Senate.

With these general principles in mind, King and Haydon drew up a preliminary and incomplete slate, as follows: from the Maritimes, Fielding and Sinclair; from Quebec, Lapointe, Gouin, Beland and Dandurand; from Ontario, Drury, Kennedy, Murphy and Murdock; from the prairies, Crerar, Hudson, Motherwell and/or Marshall; and from British Columbia, Bostock or General Sir Arthur Currie.<sup>6</sup> The composition of this first slate is a good indication of King's initial intentions. His list, leaning heavily toward the agrarian interests, not only included three militantly low-tariff Liberals, Motherwell, Marshall and McMaster, together with two leaders of the more flexible group of Quebec Liberals, Lapointe and Beland, but it contained also the names of two leaders of the farmers movement, Crerar and Drury, and that of Crerar's close

6. Currie, a Liberal before the war, was no longer in political life, but King admired his war record and felt he needed a prominent soldier in his government.





friend and political ally, the Independent Liberal A. B. Hudson. Admittedly, a countervailing force was provided in the presence of four strong protectionists, Gouin, Dandurand, Kennedy and Fielding, but other claimants of a similar bent were conspicuously missing, and among the latter were Graham, Lemieux, Robb, D. D. McKenzie and Walter Mitchell. Taken as a whole, the slate was designed to reassure the farmers' spokesmen that the new government would not be weighted against them, and that, if they accepted membership, they would be able to make substantial progress in implementing the economic policies to which they were committed. It was hopefully framed, in other words, to attract the Progressive leaders into a Liberal government, and on that basis King was ready to negotiate, provided, of course, that he could be reasonably sure of general support from the main elements of his own following, and especially from the Quebec Liberals. Immediately after his conversation with Haydon on Thursday afternoon, Mackenzie King telegraphed Ernest Lapointe to come to Ottawa on Saturday - his first summons to a member of the Liberal parliamentary group.

While waiting for Lapointe, Mackenzie King went over his slate again, and on Friday he had another talk with Andrew Haydon. King was now beginning to allocate portfolios among prospective ministers. In several instances he was already quite clear: thus he assigned Fielding, Finance;



Drury, Railways; Kennedy, Public Works; Crerar, Interior (with Immigration and Colonization); Sinclair, Customs and Inland Revenue; Beland, Secretary of State; Murdock, Labor; and McMaster, Solicitor General. From the beginning King reserved for himself the offices of Prime Minister, President of the Privy Council and Secretary of State for External Affairs. There were other individuals, however, on whose assignments he was less definite: he thought of Hudson or Lapointe for Justice; Lapointe or Lemieux for Marine and Fisheries (including Naval Affairs); Motherwell or Marshall for Agriculture; Gouin or Dandurand for Leader in the Senate without portfolio. During the second talk with Haydon, two other names appeared, Lemieux and Bureau, and, although King's plans for them are not entirely clear from the evidence available, he seems to have been thinking of Lemieux for a judicial appointment or, failing that, for Marine and Fisheries, and of Bureau for the Senate, possibly with the portfolio of Public Works.

By the evening of Friday, the 9th, an outline of the cabinet was beginning to take shape in King's mind, and it was at this point that he made his first post-election overture to the Progressives. Andrew Haydon, at King's direction, invited T. A. Crerar, by telegram, to meet him in Toronto on the following Wednesday. The telegram emphasized the importance of the meeting and the need for secrecy. Before Crerar's reply was received, the



interview with Lapointe took place.

#### IV King's First Interview with Ernest Lapointe

Ernest Lapointe arrived in Ottawa on Saturday, December 10th, and spent most of the morning with Mackenzie King. It was then slightly more than three months since King had offered Lapointe his choice of any portfolio and had promised him a role of special influence in cabinet-making, and on this, their first meeting after the election, King began by repeating these assurances in unqualified terms:

I told him I regarded him as nearest to me and would give him my confidence in full now and always. We would work out matters together. I regarded him as the real leader in Quebec, had sent for him first of all as promised. Asked which portfolio he would like and said he could have it - he said Justice - that he was not good at business administration that Justice would give him the prestige he needed in his province. He is worthy of Justice, is just and honourable at heart - a beautiful Christian character - he shall have it.<sup>7</sup>

With the question of Lapointe's portfolio and role apparently settled, the conversation moved freely over all the problems of cabinet formation. Lapointe agreed that national unity should be the central objective and that this prescribed a broad attitude toward the farmers; he volunteered the suggestion that Crerar and Drury be offered cabinet posts. He also produced a slate of his own and, both in

7. Mackenzie King Diary, 10 December 1921, cited in R. MacGregor Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King: A Political Biography, 1874-1923, (University of Toronto Press, 1958) p. 362.





cabinet membership and portfolio assignments, it corresponded closely with the one drawn up by King and Haydon. The principal differences were that Lapointe's list included D. D. McKenzie as a second minister from Nova Scotia, Copp or C. W. Robinson from New Brunswick, and F. T. Congdon from the Yukon, if elected, for Militia and Defence.<sup>8</sup>

Lapointe had no objection to reducing the cabinet but he felt that Quebec ought to have four ministers plus the Solicitor General.<sup>9</sup> With this King agreed and he was also pleased to discover that Lapointe's ideas about the composition of the Quebec representation accorded, on the whole, with his own. Lapointe suggested Gouin for Senate Leader without portfolio and Beland for Secretary of State. Bureau was no problem, for he simply wanted a senatorship. Lemieux, on the other hand, would have to be included, in Lapointe's judgment, unless he was willing to accept appointment to the bench. As to the English-speaking representation, Lapointe's preference was for Robb, but he agreed that

8. Robinson was Minister of Lands and Mines in the New Brunswick Government. The election returns from the Yukon were not in yet; when they were completed, Congdon was defeated. King readily accepted Lapointe's suggestions about Congdon and about the New Brunswick representation, but he objected to McKenzie whom he was thinking of sidetracking on to the bench.
9. The Meighen cabinet, prior to the 1921 election, had contained four ministers from Quebec, including three French Canadians, L. P. Normand, L. de G. Belley and Rodolphe Monty, and one English Canadian, C. C. Ballantyne. A fifth member of the ministry, G. A. Fauteux, was Solicitor General, a post which was not of cabinet rank.



McMaster would make an excellent Solicitor General.

Ernest Lapointe's recommendations, from a Quebec standpoint, had positive merit. They resisted any reduction in Quebec representation; they preserved an even numerical balance between the districts of Quebec and Montreal; and they gave moderate recognition to the English-speaking minority. On the other hand, in claiming the senior portfolio for himself and relegating Gouin to the Senate leadership, and in leaving Lemieux's interests undefined and exposed, Lapointe, with King's encouragement, was clearly tilting the balance in favour of his own group and thus inviting opposition. It was a jarring prospect and King noticed that throughout their conversation Lapointe was distinctly nervous on the subject of his Montreal colleagues. Lapointe predicted that Lemieux would be offended at not receiving the first summons to Ottawa, and he urged King to send for him without delay. As for Gouin, Lapointe thought he might want Justice and fully expected him to be hostile to the idea of bringing in the Progressives. He feared, therefore, that, if Gouin were asked not only to swallow King's plans for the farmers but also to accept a minor portfolio for himself, there would be an uproar in Montreal. To avoid this without relaxing his own hold on the Justice portfolio was Lapointe's immediate and puzzling concern, and on the day following his first interview with King he thought he had found a solution. In a letter, addressed to "My dear





Leader", Lapointe wrote:

Re Quebec representation, I really believe that you should offer Gouin a Department, as well as leadership in the Senate....If he prefers to be without portfolio, then you must still give Quebec four Departments. Otherwise, we would likely meet trouble, specially if your plan, re Western representation, which I approve, is to succeed, for a strong element in our province will not like it.....<sup>10</sup>

Mackenzie King was thus warned at the outset - and by the man whom he had chosen for his principal associate in cabinet-making - that his plan to rebuild the Liberal party by bringing in the leaders of the farmers movement might run into trouble and that, if he went on with it, he would have to proceed cautiously and flexibly in his dealings with the Montreal Liberals. Still, Lapointe had unquestionably given his blessing to the plan, as well as to most of the other features of King's original slate, and, in view of the great importance of this personal commitment, the main effect of their conversation on King was to crystallize his resolve to press ahead. King was persuaded that, if

10. Mackenzie King Papers, Ernest Lapointe to King, letter undated but probably written on December 11, 1921. In the same letter Lapointe asked what King would think, in the event of Gouin taking a Department, of appointing Bureau to the cabinet without portfolio, and in a final paragraph he disclosed again his sensitivity on the score of Lemieux: "I would also suggest that you don't mention to Rodolphe that you sought my opinion on any matter which he will submit to you. He is very sensitive; but I think that you will succeed to convince him on all things without mentioning me."



negotiations with Crerar and Drury could be brought to a successful conclusion before opposition within the Liberal party was fully aroused, the advantages of such a stroke, to the party and to himself personally, would greatly outweigh the hazards. Compensation, it had begun to appear, would have to be given Gouin and Lemieux, perhaps in the form of more generous treatment in the matter of portfolios than he had initially intended, but just how strong their opposition might be and precisely what price they would exact for co-operation were questions which could only be answered in personal interviews. King decided to send for them at once and also to push on with the full range of negotiations which his plans required.

Immediately after his interview with Lapointe, King telegraphed Lemieux to come to Ottawa and, with Lapointe's approval, he sent similar messages to Fielding, Murphy, Beland, Bureau and Kennedy. King also arranged to meet Drury in Toronto on the following Wednesday, and when a message arrived from Crerar, in reply to Haydon's telegram, expressing a strong preference for Winnipeg over Toronto as a meeting-place, he agreed at once and sent Haydon to Winnipeg on the evening train. Finally, with these engagements definitely scheduled, King felt sufficiently confident of early success to inform Prime Minister Meighen, in reply to a query as to when he would be ready to form a government, that he would give him a definite answer



by Thursday, the 15th, and that he hoped to be ready by Saturday, the 17th.

V Negotiations with the Progressives: Haydon's Mission to Winnipeg

Andrew Haydon arrived in Winnipeg on Monday morning, December 12th, and that evening he had his first interview with T. A. Crerar and A. B. Hudson. Between that time and Friday, the 16th, there were to be four such meetings, all of them held in the privacy of Hudson's law office and each promptly relayed by Haydon to Mackenzie King in coded telegrams addressed to F. A. McGregor, King's secretary.<sup>11</sup>

Haydon opened by stating, as Hudson recorded it, "that Mr. K. was anxious to form a government which would be representative of all parts of the Dominion and would be free from the domination by the Montreal interests and any reactionary influences in his own party". He then produced a list<sup>12</sup> of men whom King had in mind inviting into his government. With two exceptions it was the same slate, including Crerar and Drury, that King and Haydon had drawn up on the preceding Thursday and Friday. The exceptions were the addition of

11. The evidence of what was said in these meetings is to be found in the telegrams between Haydon and McGregor which are preserved in the Mackenzie King Papers and in the A. B. Hudson Papers which contain a memorandum by Hudson, together with the telegrams.
12. Hudson recorded the list as follows: Fielding, Sinclair, Copp, Lapointe, McMaster, Beland, Gouin (without portfolio), Gen. Currie, Drury, Murphy, Kennedy, Murdock, Crerar, Motherwell, Duncan Marshall, Bostock.





A. B. Copp and the deletion of A. B. Hudson; on the latter point Haydon explained that King intended to restrict every province except Ontario and Quebec to one minister, and that, if Hudson's name were added to Crerar's, Manitoba would be over-represented.

Mackenzie King's cabinet list made an excellent immediate impression on Crerar and Hudson: they told Haydon that it "would be regarded in the west as an evidence of King's desire to create a really forward-looking Gov't.". Satisfactory though it was, however, the slate was not enough. The Winnipeggers stipulated at once that there would have to be a clear understanding on the policy of the government in several important particulars. At this point the discussion turned to questions of policy and cabinet membership, and for the remainder of the week the negotiations in Winnipeg were wholly taken up with these two aspects of the issue. Specifically, Crerar and Hudson put forward five conditions: first, a tariff according to the terms of the Liberal platform of 1919; second, the immediate transfer of natural resources to the Prairie Provinces, with a subsequent financial adjustment, if necessary; third, the reduction of railway freight rates to the levels prescribed by the Crow's Nest Pass and Manitoba Agreements; fourth, a willingness to reconsider reciprocity; and fifth, a full and fair trial for public



ownership of railways. To these policy requirements Crerar added one other, relating to cabinet membership: the Prairie Provinces, in his judgment, were entitled to four places in the government, and he claimed three of them for Hudson, himself and some Progressive from Alberta.<sup>13</sup> Finally, and, from the standpoint of the time required, most ominously, Crerar made it clear that he would have to consult his followers about the whole proposition. For this purpose a meeting of the western Progressive Members - elect was called for Tuesday, the 20th, in Saskatoon.

Haydon reported the first conference to Mackenzie King and awaited instructions.<sup>14</sup> King had not expected such a bill of conditions and a day went by before a full reply<sup>15</sup> was received from Ottawa. In that interval Haydon had a second conference with Crerar and Hudson. This time the only subject was prairie representation in the cabinet.

13. The prairie provinces had been represented by five ministers in the Union Government of 1917 and by four in the Meighen Government.

14. Andrew Haydon to F. A. McGregor, 12 December, 1921.

15. King did send Haydon one telegram on Tuesday, the 13th, but it did not deal directly with the westerners' terms; instead, the telegram instructed Haydon to sound "feelings friends" with respect to the Members of Parliament for Winnipeg North (E. J. McMurray) and Winnipeg Centre (J. S. Woodsworth) as cabinet possibilities and asked Haydon to hold the fort until King's return from his visit to Drury. Clearly, when King sent this telegram, he was sounding opinion in Ottawa, considering other alternatives to the western Progressives, and deliberating on what his reply to Crerar and Hudson should be.



Crerar was more than ever convinced that the **Prairie** Provinces should have four ministers, and he and Hudson succeeded in persuading Haydon not only that this was a reasonable request but that the Justice portfolio should go to Hudson. For Saskatchewan, they ruled out Motherwell on account of his intense hostility to the farmers movement, and suggested instead C. W. Hamilton, Minister of Agriculture in the provincial government. For Alberta, they conceded that Charles Stewart, the former Premier, would be acceptable. The second conference left Haydon decidedly optimistic. He relayed a summary to King and added: "Your proposed slate very acceptable and gives here guarantee good faith your part which prairies have disbelieved. You can put this through but perhaps not this week. Much depends on Drury also."<sup>16</sup>

On Wednesday, December 14, the awaited reply to Haydon's first telegram arrived. "I am ready to consider following," Mackenzie King's telegram began, "as basis of understanding to ensure coalescence of Liberal and Progressive groups". There followed his response to each of the five policy conditions which Crerar and Hudson had stipulated: first, a tariff according to the Liberal amendment to the 1921 budget, repudiating the protective principle and calling for changes which would reduce the cost of living and the

16. Andrew Haydon to F. A. McGregor, 14 December 1921.





cost of implements of production; second, transfer of natural resources to the western provinces at the first session of Parliament, coupled with discontinuance of the special annual subsidy which the Dominion had paid those provinces in lieu of resources; third, no commitment on freight rates; fourth and fifth, full acceptance of the conditions relating to reciprocity and the publicly-owned railways. King was thus willing to give ground before Progressive demands on economic policy, but on the quota of prairie ministers he was unyielding. The cabinet had to be cut down, he explained, the Maritime provinces were being limited, and, therefore, he could not possibly consider more than one minister from each of the western provinces. Motherwell he regarded as entitled to represent Saskatchewan, but, he asked, could not the Alberta Progressives be induced to provide a seat for Hudson or Crerar?<sup>17</sup>

Haydon, on the same day that he received these instructions, laid them before Crerar and Hudson at a third conference.<sup>18</sup> The westerners were far from satisfied. They took King's modest concessions in their stride and pressed for full acceptance of the pith and substance of all their original terms. His tariff formula they rejected as altogether too indefinite, and, thrusting him back on

17. F. A. McGregor to Andrew Haydon, 14 December 1921.

18. J. F. Fisher of the Manitoba Liberal Executive, was also present at this conference.



the uncomfortable ground of the 1919 Liberal platform, they demanded immediate and substantial general reductions, together with a generous enlargement of the free list. Freight rates, they insisted, were a burning question in the west and nothing less than full restoration of the Crow's Nest Pass Agreement would suffice. On the resources question, they held out for an act which would hand over the resources to the provinces forthwith and provide for settlement of all the financial details by arbitration. Similarly, with respect to western representation in the cabinet, Crerar stood on his original position: redistribution, he contended, would soon give the prairies an additional fifteen seats and, in the meantime, that section should have one more minister. He still baulked at Motherwell; for Alberta his first choice was Stewart, his second Herbert Greenfield, the U.F.A. Premier.

Once again, the results of this latest conference in Winnipeg were promptly transmitted to Mackenzie King,<sup>19</sup> but, if the Progressive spokesmen hoped for further concessions, they were disappointed. King would go no farther, and the bargaining, at least on a long-distance basis, was at an end. This was made plain within twenty-four hours in two final telegrams from Ottawa, one from King, the other from Ernest Lapointe. "Can only consider",

19. Andrew Haydon to F. A. McGregor, 14 December 1921.





King's telegram ran, "taking representation from Progressive party into cabinet on same basis as representation from ranks of Liberals, namely on policy as announced and faith in personnel of administration to do justly by all concerned. Unless our friends prepared to discuss possibility on this understanding which is common to all please let me know at once. Pressure is very great as to other alternatives and I must come to quick decision. Each day's delay likely to prove prejudicial to what we have been considering". In the same message King claimed Drury's support for the view that "men not terms" should be the main consideration, and stated that Drury was willing to enter the cabinet if he could arrange for a successor in Ontario. It was "advisable", King concluded, for Haydon, Crerar and Hudson all to come to Ottawa immediately.<sup>20</sup>

Ernest Lapointe's telegram, sent at King's request, called upon Crerar, in urgent and dramatic fashion, to put his trust in men not terms and to act at once:

"Sorry so many conditions required by friend Crerar. Country on verge of collapse. Honest and well-meaning men must come together to save it and trust one another. Only way to find moderate and best solution of all big problems. Now is opportunity for building a reunited Canada which may not present itself again. Speedy decision necessary otherwise shall have to yield to pressure from other quarters whose views as to incoming cabinet differ from his [King's] and mine. Ask Crerar not consult many but follow his own judgment and conscience."<sup>21</sup>

20. F. A. McGregor to Andrew Haydon, 15 December 1921.

21. Ernest Lapointe to Andrew Haydon, 15 December 1921.



## VI Eastern Pressures in Ottawa

Why did Mackenzie King cut short the Winnipeg negotiations, and why did he and Lapointe appeal so urgently to the western Progressives to accept cabinet invitations without further delay? The telegrams from King and Lapointe referred to very great pressure in Ottawa: what was the object of this pressure and from what quarters was it exerted?

There was pressure, undoubtedly, and Mackenzie King was beginning to find it heavy, but, for the most part, it did not take the simple and direct form of flat opposition to inviting leaders of the farmers movement into the government. King was now the focus of all the pressures which interested individuals and groups invariably bring to bear, by telegram, letter and personal interview, upon a Prime Minister-elect for the purpose of obtaining ministerial posts and other appointments for themselves and their friends. During the four days of Haydon's mission to Winnipeg, King had been in almost uninterrupted consultation with leading Liberals from the Maritimes and the central provinces - principally those whom he had summoned after his first talk with Lapointe - about various aspects of the task at hand, including his plan of bringing in the Progressives. Of those who offered advice, King found only one man, W. C. Kennedy of Ontario, to be strongly opposed to the plan. Other Ontario spokesmen, notably Charles Murphy and the editors of the Toronto Star and



the Toronto Globe, were definitely in favour of it, and so were two elder statesmen, Sir Allen Aylesworth and Sir William Mulock. Nor was there opposition from the Maritimes. W. S. Fielding, to whom King offered the Finance portfolio, strongly endorsed an alignment with the farmers and approved of the terms of King's reply to the initial conditions advanced by the Progressives in Winnipeg. Even more encouraging, from King's standpoint, was the discovery that three French-Canadian leaders, Beland, Lemieux and Gouin, were prepared to give the plan qualified support. To be sure, the views of these three differed in detail. They all favoured Drury; none of them was enthusiastic about Crerar. Beland was very hesitant about taking in any western Progressive; Lemieux did not think well of Hudson because of his stand on the Manitoba schools issue, though he was not disposed to rule Hudson out; Gouin, on the other hand, preferred Hudson to Crerar and suggested that Crerar should come in later and that, for immediate purposes, it would be sufficient to bring in some Alberta Progressive with Hudson and Drury.

These early soundings, though generally reassuring, was no guarantee of a safe passage for Mackenzie King's plans for the farmer leaders. The highest card which he had to play, in his negotiations with the Progressives, was the manifestly low-tariff complexion of the government he was seeking to form. His original slate had been





favourably viewed by Crerar and Hudson and, thought it had not proved sufficiently alluring, by itself, to draw them in at once, it was still essential that nothing be done to diminish whatever confidence it had created. The difficulty was that, while Haydon in Winnipeg was negotiating on the basis of this slate, King in Ottawa was being subjected to mounting pressure to alter it in ways which would jeopardize the western negotiations and, as well, the associated negotiations with Drury. Already there were unmistakable signs, in the advice tendered by Kennedy and Murphy, of a campaign in support of George Graham, and King was beginning to worry about the hazards of leaving him out. Similarly, King's intention to restrict Nova Scotia to a single minister encountered formidable resistance, immediately from Fielding, almost as promptly from Quebec and Ontario spokesmen, and finally, when the word got back to Nova Scotia, from a medley of local politicians and groups who kept up a perfect clamour of protest until the day the cabinet was sworn in. The names which were most assiduously advanced, D. D. McKenzie and E. M. Macdonald, had been missing from King's slate and they were both, like George Graham, "reactionaries" in the view of those associated with the farmers movement.

Even more disquieting, however, were the pressures that were beginning to come from Montreal. The Montreal Liberals, needing no instruction in the importance of



"men not terms" to the cumulative decisions of a government, set to work to make certain that the cabinet contained a reassuring proportion of "sound" men acceptable to the business community. Though they were by no means indifferent to the representation of other provinces, the main interest of the Montrealers lay with their own province and their own district, and they concentrated, therefore, on pushing forward the members of their own group and on sidetracking or downgrading their Quebec rivals. Thus Rodolphe Lemieux, in his first interview with Mackenzie King on December 12, spoke out strongly for Gouin and Mitchell, passed lightly over the Lapointe group, and jettisoned McMaster. When King remarked that he did not see how he could give portfolios to both Lemieux and Gouin and that the former should have the first say, Lemieux replied that he was tired of politics and was thinking of the Speakership of the House of Commons for himself. Gouin, he urged, should be kept in the Commons (thus leaving the Senate Leadership for Dandurand) and given either Railways or Justice (thus challenging Lapointe). As to English-speaking representation, Lemieux supported Robb and pressed for Mitchell, a combination which would give Montreal four of six Quebec ministers and eliminate McMaster whom Lemieux recommended for a senior Judicial appointment.

Sir Lomer Gouin, whom King saw on the day after his interview with Lemieux, took the same line. The province of Quebec, he contended, should have



six ministers, four French and two English, with Robb and Mitchell filling the latter roles, and with Lemieux included as the fourth minister from Montreal. On the subject of his own appointment, Gouin extricated himself from the minor role of Senate Leader by saying that for the present he would prefer not to replace Dandurand. What he wanted instead was Justice, or the Presidency of the Privy Council, or appointment without portfolio. When King replied that, subject to his promise to Lapointe, he could let Gouin have one of these or some other portfolio, Gouin quickly narrowed the range of acceptable departments by stating that he did not want one with much administration, like Marine and Fisheries, and he suggested that King persuade Lapointe to take that department or Railways. The representations of Gouin and Lemieux were soon reinforced by two other Montrealers, Senators Raoul Dandurand and Frederick B  ique, who obtained an interview with King on Thursday, the 15th, two days after his talk with Gouin. The two Senators took the ground that Montreal, by reason of its generous assistance to the Liberal party in the election, was entitled to four Cabinet ministers: Gouin and Robb, of course, would have to be included, but, in addition, they pressed very hard for Mitchell as a minister without portfolio, and they, like Gouin, were most reluctant to see Lemieux's platform ability muffled by the Commons





Speakership.

Mackenzie King was thus exposed, in the first full week of cabinet negotiations, to multiple pressures to reshape the original design of his cabinet. This he was very loath to do and his initial response to the importunate easterners was to hold them off and avoid, as far as possible, specific undertakings. But he could stall for only a few days at most and by the middle of that week it was clear that, if the pressures grew more insistent, he would have to yield and find places in the cabinet for some of the "reactionaries" whose claims were being so energetically touted. There was, therefore, in MacGregor Dawson's words, "a very real danger that the original 'purity' of this body which had seemed so attractive to Western eyes, would become gravely compromised and the Progressive leaders would then find it increasingly difficult to enter the Cabinet themselves or to justify their entrance to their followers."<sup>22</sup> King's enemy, in other words, was time, and, in the time that would be consumed by further bargaining with the Progressives followed by consultations with their followers, he saw the prospect of his whole position being overrun. It was to avert this consequence that he broke off negotiations in Winnipeg and, in conjunction with Lapointe, despatched the telegrams urging

22. R. MacGregor Dawson, William Lyon Mackenzie King, Vol. I, p. 364.



the Westerners to come in and to come quickly. "'Will you walk a little faster', said a whiting to a snail, /'There's a porpoise close behind us, and he's treading on my tail'."

There was, quite possibly, an additional reason for King's peremptory action. On the previous day, Wednesday, the 14th, he had seen Premier Drury in Toronto and had invited him to join the government. Drury showed a strong interest and said he would like to accept if he could arrange for a successor, a problem he would have to take up with his colleagues and supporters. He raised the idea of a Liberal-Progressive coalition at Ottawa but King turned it down emphatically, saying it would have to be a straight Liberal government. When Drury indicated that Crerar had kept in touch with him about the discussions in Winnipeg, King said he thought Crerar was making a mistake in exacting so many conditions on economic policy, and that he should pin his faith on the men whom King was proposing as colleagues. On this point Drury, according to King, agreed with him, and said he would so inform Crerar. From this conversation, King may have concluded that he had already gone as far as he needed to go in concessions to the Progressives and that he could press them for an immediate decision. This, at any rate, is what he proceeded to do on the following day.



VII T.A. Crerar's Predicament: The Hudson Mission to Ottawa

The attempt to stampede the Westerners failed. On Friday, the 16th, Haydon took the latest telegrams from King and Lapointe to a fourth and final conference with Crerar and Hudson. Crerar was now in a very difficult position. "He is anxious efforts should succeed", Haydon reported to King, "but must act in way to carry support West."<sup>23</sup> It was the imperative need of western support which had caused Crerar to bargain so closely in the Winnipeg negotiations, and he was still far from confident that Mackenzie King's invitation, even with the modest concessions which had been extracted from him, would be sufficient to overcome the intense distrust of the old political parties and of political leadership generally which pervaded the farmers movement. And it was the same necessity which had prompted Crerar, after his first conference with Haydon, to call a meeting of the western Progressive members in Saskatoon, a step which, in his judgment, remained, perhaps more than ever, an elementary and indispensable precaution. It was decided, accordingly, that Crerar would go ahead with the Saskatoon meeting on the following Tuesday, and that, immediately afterwards, he would go east for a final consultation with King, arriving in the capital on Saturday, the 24th.

23. Andrew Haydon to F. A. McGregor, 16 December 1921.





The decision meant further delay and, when it was relayed to King, he protested at once that he could not possibly wait for a full week.<sup>24</sup> It was arranged, therefore, that Hudson should go to Ottawa so as to be there to receive from Crerar, on Tuesday or Wednesday, a telegraphic report of the Saskatoon meeting, and that Drury should be brought to Ottawa on Wednesday to confer with Hudson and King. From King's standpoint, even this delay was perilous and before Crerar left for Saskatoon another obstacle arose which further diminished the prospects of success.

On Saturday evening, December 17th, Crerar reviewed the week's developments at a small gathering in Winnipeg of his closest friends and advisers, including J. W. Dafoe, the editor of the Manitoba Free Press. During the election campaign the Free Press had given strong independent support to the Progressive party and, though Dafoe was not present at any of the post-election conferences with Haydon, Crerar had kept in touch with him throughout and he was<sup>25</sup> "a very interested observer" of the negotiations.

Since the end of the war Dafoe, who had broken with the Liberal party over conscription, had been hoping and working for a realignment of Canadian politics on a clear-cut division between a Conservative party, representing

24. F. A. McGregor to Andrew Haydon, 17 December 1921.

25. Ramsay Cook, The Politics of John W. Dafoe and the Free Press, (University of Toronto Press, 1963), pp. 108-120.



the forces of business, and a genuinely liberal and progressive party "which would unite all those people who opposed government by the 'interests'".<sup>26</sup> He had supported the farmers movement because he saw in it the nucleus of a political party of the second type, a nucleus which might be enlarged to take in all the low-tariff groups in the nation, including the low-tariff wing of the Liberal party. If the Progressives were to be the core of a new and purified liberalism, then, in Dafoe's judgment, they must be kept together and, equally, they must be kept free of contamination by either of the two old and reactionary political parties, and on the latter score he was highly suspicious of Mackenzie King's post-election overtures to the Progressive leaders. Dafoe's suspicions, undoubtedly passed on to Crerar, coincided precisely with those held by Sir Clifford Sifton, the publisher of the Manitoba Free Press.

Sifton, who had resigned from the Laurier government on the separate schools question and had broken completely with his party over conscription, wanted, above all, to see a postwar Liberal party in which French and Catholic and Montreal influences were reduced to a subordinate place. In the circumstances of the 1921 election and cabinet formation, Sifton thought he saw a possibility for the realization of this objective through a Liberal-Progressive

26. Ibid., p. 109.



coalition in which the identity and influence of the Progressives were carefully buttressed beforehand. Holding these views, he had been disturbed by Mackenzie King's pre-election statements against a coalition; in November he had remonstrated with King privately on the subject, only to find him stubbornly opposed. Sifton, like Dafoe, correctly diagnosed King's post-election intentions to be not coalition with, but absorption of, the Progressives into a government composed, in Sifton's phrase, of "the leftovers of the Laurier aggregation", and offering nothing more to the farmers movement than a few cabinet posts and some general assurances on policy. An arrangement of this kind was no more to Sifton's taste than it was to Dafoe's, and he promptly set to work to warn the Progressive leaders, through Dafoe, of its dangers. "Once they are in without anything more definite than that", Sifton wrote to Dafoe, "the Progressive party as a political force comes to an end. The policy of the Government will be dominated by Quebec and anybody that does not like it can have the privilege of getting out but in the meantime he will have fatally compromised his political position."<sup>27</sup> The only real protection for the Progressives, Sifton insisted, was a formal, open coalition supported by a fifty-fifty division of cabinet posts and by "a written agreement in regard to some matters of policy."<sup>28</sup> "Otherwise",

27. J. W. Dafoe Papers, Sifton to Dafoe, 14 December 1921.

28. J. W. Dafoe Papers, Sifton to Dafoe, 8 December 1921, and 14 December 1921, and 16 December 1921.





he predicted, "the Progressives will share the fate of the Liberals who went into the Union Government, with the absolute certainty that if the Progressive movement stays alive the followers will turn upon the leaders who have gone into the Government and regard them as having betrayed their principles."<sup>29</sup> Sifton also communicated directly with Crerar in a letter written on the day the negotiations began in Winnipeg: he urged that "an absolutely straight front should be presented against any attempt to secure the adhesion to the Government of individual members of the Progressive party".<sup>30</sup>

Notwithstanding all of Sifton's warnings (reinforced, in all probability, by similar advice from Dafoe), neither Crerar nor Hudson raised the coalition issue in any of their discussions with Andrew Haydon, even though it was evident that a coalition was not part of Mackenzie King's offer.<sup>31</sup> The only Progressive to do so during that week,

29. Ibid.

30. Sir Clifford Sifton Papers, Sifton to Crerar, 12 December 1921.

31. The silence of Crerar and Hudson on this point, in their discussions with Haydon, is difficult to explain. It is possible that, in view of the election returns which gave the Progressives only a little over half of the number of seats won by the Liberals, Crerar did not feel that he was in a position to demand a coalition along the lines that Sifton was urging. This, however, is only an inference from the fact that Crerar was disappointed in the election: he had expected the Progressives to win between 70 and 80 seats, including at least four in the Maritimes and a larger number than they did in Ontario, and he had hoped for a total figure exceeding 90. (Sir Clifford Sifton Papers, Crerar to Sifton, 9 December 1921).



E. C. Drury, in his conversation with King in Toronto, met with a flat refusal. By the end of the week, however, Crerar, having failed to exact the specific pledges on policy and on the number of portfolios that he desired, faced the prospect of confronting the Saskatoon meeting with precisely the kind of vague proposition which Sifton had predicted would lead to disaster for the Progressive party. In these chilling circumstances the case for a coalition took on a new force and urgency, and at the Saturday evening gathering in Winnipeg the Dafoe-Sifton counsels prevailed. The clinching argument was supplied by the intimation that Drury had reached the same conclusion. Crerar read out a telegram he had received from the Ontario Premier as follows:

Am of opinion that for sake of future progressives should guard against absorption by liberals. If alliance or coalition formed should be conditional on King professedly accepting fundamental parts of progressive platform and leaving Gouin bloc out of Cabinet. This I think he is prepared to do - political continuity of progressives should also be assured. Fear I cannot accept invitation. Think you should come east as soon as possible.<sup>32</sup>

"This statement of views by Drury", Dafoe reported to Sifton, "exactly corresponded with the opinion which the meeting had reached itself. There was practically unanimity in the view that co-operation could only be possible on

32. A. B. Hudson Papers, copy of an unsigned, undated memorandum in Hudson's handwriting.



the basis of a formal coalition with public guarantees which would be a protection for Mr. Crerar against his own people".<sup>33</sup> Accordingly, the matter was decided and A. B. Hudson, who was present at the gathering and who was to leave for Ottawa on the following morning, was charged with the task of conveying these terms to Mackenzie King.

The Winnipeg negotiations ended on Friday, December 16, with nothing settled between the Progressives and the Liberals. Nothing could be settled until after Crerar's meeting with his supporters in Saskatoon and Hudson's arrival in Ottawa both of which were scheduled for the following Tuesday. On Friday Mackenzie King told the Governor General that he would need more time to complete his slate, and over the weekend he enjoyed a breathing-space of relative tranquillity in Ottawa. In that interval King was able to solve a few of his easier problems. He decided to offer a cabinet post to Dr. J. H. King of British Columbia, assigning a portfolio temporarily to Senator Bostock until a seat could be found for Dr. King. He settled upon John E. Sinclair for Prince Edward Island in accordance with virtually unanimous advice from that province and elsewhere. For New Brunswick, he moved to the conclusion that for want of a better "available" alter-

33. J. W. Dafoe Papers, Dafoe to Sifton, 19 December 1921.





native, there was nothing to do but take in A. B. Copp.<sup>34</sup> Nova Scotia continued to present difficulty (the flow of communications from the province in support of a second minister gave no sign of abatement), but D. D. McKenzie, one of the most determined claimants, eased matters by offering to resign at any time that a judgeship became available. King made no commitment but he began to give greater weight to McKenzie's claims on the score of his temporary leadership of the party in 1919, and it occurred to him, as well, that a portfolio for McKenzie might be a useful device for turning aside more objectionable aspirants.

Progress on these details still left open, of course, all the dangerous and interwoven issues of representation for the central provinces and the prairies, but on this weekend, at least, the pressures from Quebec fell off sharply and on Monday morning, King received from Andrew Haydon a cheerful account of his mission to Winnipeg. Haydon had concluded that the prairies would have to be given four ministers, though he thought Motherwell could

34. This was the advice of the New Brunswick government, including Premier Foster who ruled himself out as a federal prospect. (Mackenzie King Papers, W. E. Foster to King, 9 December 1921, and C. W. Robinson to King, 12 December 1921.) Mackenzie King was reluctant to pass over the two Acadians, Onésiphore Turgeon and J. E. Michaud, but he concluded that the appointment of either would antagonize the supporters of the other.



be included in this number, and he was confident that, even if Crerar should finally decline King's invitation, Hudson's acceptance was practically certain. Haydon said not a word about a coalition: the question had not come up in his talks with Crerar and Hudson, and neither he nor King had any inkling of the revised terms which Hudson was then bearing from Winnipeg; nor had Drury yet informed King of his decision to stay out. Ominously enough, however, from the standpoint of the reception that Hudson was likely to get in Ottawa, the weekend had brought forth fresh evidence of hostility to the Progressives in Ontario.

George Graham, in a long and painful interview with King which exposed the edges of their mutual dislike, succeeded in leaving the clear impression that many Liberals in the western part of the province would take offence at the appointment of Drury to the cabinet. The same impression was conveyed by Sydney Little, a prominent London supporter, and by Hartley Dewart, Liberal leader in the Ontario legislature; and Arthur Hardy, a confidant of King, took care to remind him that the feelings of W. C. Kennedy were still "very strong in the matter".<sup>35</sup> None of these intimations of opposition caused King even to consider rescinding his invitation to Drury, but neither did they incline him to be more flexible on the form of the alliance.

35. Mackenzie King Papers, Hardy to King, 17 December 1921.



He was quite ready, indeed eager, to accept and defend Crerar and Drury as colleagues in a Liberal government, but not as leaders, co-ordinate with himself, of a coalition in which both partners would retain their separate identities and work together on an equal footing. Faced with this additional evidence that his approach to the Progressives was unpopular in the central provinces, King simply braced himself as best he could against the expectation that the second full week of cabinet-making would see a renewal of vigorous lobbying in Ottawa.

King's expectation was amply fulfilled. On Tuesday morning, December 20, A. B. Hudson arrived in Ottawa and the coalition question was immediately thrust into the forefront of the negotiations. At an interview with King and Haydon, Hudson read a telegram from Crerar whose preliminary soundings in Saskatoon had led him to believe that co-operation would be acceptable to the western Progressives provided that it was arranged along the lines of the telegram from Drury which had been discussed at the Winnipeg gathering on the preceding Saturday.<sup>36</sup> Hudson then read out the Drury telegram with its emphasis on guarding "against absorption by the Liberals" and on preserving the "political continuity" of the Progressives.

36. A. B. Hudson Papers, Crerar to Hudson, 19 December 1921.





King, who had understood Drury to accept his objections to a coalition, was surprised and disconcerted. He replied that his own followers would not accept a coalition and that, regardless of how his refusal might be interpreted, he simply could not consider the proposal.<sup>37</sup> He told Hudson to inform Crerar at once, and, when Drury telephoned in the midst of the conversation, King also requested him to wire Crerar not to insist on a coalition.<sup>38</sup> Ernest Lapointe, with whom King conferred immediately after the interview with Hudson, took precisely the same position. "I also feel", Lapointe wrote that day to a Montreal friend, "that the request of a formal coalition cannot be accepted. Our friends won't object to our dealing with individuals, not with a party which desires to perpetuate itself as independent from and sometimes opposed to the Liberal party. Liberalism should be good enough for all."<sup>39</sup> Two leading Albertans whom King saw later on the same day were emphatically opposed. Frank Oliver was bitterly hostile to any form of association with the Progressives; and Charles Stewart, though he approved of taking in Crerar, Hudson and Drury, did not favour a coalition.

The coalition proposal and King's rejection of it threatened the Liberal-Progressive negotiations with

37. A. B. Hudson Papers, Hudson memorandum on 1921 Cabinet formation.

38. A. B. Hudson Papers, Hudson to Crerar, 20 December 1921, copy of an unsigned, undated telegram in Hudson's handwriting.

39. A. K. Cameron Papers, Lapointe to Cameron, 20 December 1921.



immediate collapse. Within twenty-four hours of the interview with Hudson, King's plans were dealt a second blow. On Wednesday morning E. C. Drury came down from Toronto to tell King that his followers had refused to release him from his provincial responsibilities until after the next election. On the coalition question, Drury appeared ambiguous: he confirmed, in the presence of Hudson and Haydon, the statements in his telegram to Crerar advising a coalition as expressing his real judgment; but he acknowledged, in conversation with King, the latter's objections to a coalition and he advanced the opinion that Crerar and Hudson should go into the government. When King remonstrated with him, Drury countered with the suggestion that King would have to give some "visible evidence" of meeting progressive ideas. To this King replied in terms which unwittingly confirmed all the apprehensions that Sir Clifford Sifton had conveyed to Dafoe and Crerar: "I said taking in Crerar, himself and Hudson was pretty good visible evidence, they could leave the Ministry if not in sympathy as we worked out our policies."<sup>40</sup>

Thus, by noon on Wednesday, December 21, Mackenzie King's strategy of cabinet formation stood on the edge of ruin. Drury had finally withdrawn and it was clear that, if Crerar and Hudson held out for a coalition, there would be no Progressives in the new government.

40. Dawson, Mackenzie King, Vol. I, p. 368.



Then, quite suddenly, the pendulum of expectation swung back towards success. On Wednesday afternoon a telegram arrived from Crerar giving his version of the Saskatoon meeting. The western Progressive members had decided unanimously to retain their identity and organization as a party and to give independent support to progressive legislation. At the same time, however, the meeting had also given "tacit approval", in Crerar's phrase, to any Progressive member, "including myself, entering Government as individuals providing policy and personnel satisfactory to us." Crerar plainly believed that the Saskatoon meeting had not closed the door to the Council chamber: "May be able to do something on this", his telegram continued, "providing policy will be such carry support".<sup>41</sup> Crerar was already on his way to Ottawa, bringing with him a "small committee" of Progressive members, and his hopeful interpretation of the attitude of his western supporters immediately raised expectations in the capital. Hudson, when he showed the telegram to Mackenzie King, commented that it looked favourable; and King, letting hope outrun all caution, leaped to the conclusion that "the Rubicon has been crossed and that the gulf between East and West has been bridged."<sup>42</sup> The conclusion was premature but

41. A. B. Hudson Papers, Crerar to Hudson, 21 December 1921.

42. Dawson, op. cit., p. 368.





on the strength of it King decided to postpone final disposition of the cabinet until he could confer with Crerar in person.

#### VIII Quebec Pressure Reaches a Climax

Crerar was not due in Ottawa until Saturday, December 24, and this left a gap of two days, Thursday and Friday, during which time it was vital that nothing be done which would cause the "policy and personnel" of the government to appear unsatisfactory in Crerar's eyes. In that interval, however, Mackenzie King came under renewed and very heavy pressure to alter his cabinet slate.

Most of the pressure was from the Province of Quebec, and, as in the previous week, it was principally directed to strengthening the representation of the Montreal group. During the first week of negotiations the Montreal Liberals had made a strong bid to obtain six places for the province of Quebec, two of them to go to English-speaking representatives, Robb and Mitchell, and the remaining four to go to French Canadians and to be divided equally between the Gouin and Lapointe groups, a scheme of representation which, taken as a whole, would have assigned four ministers to the district of Montreal and two to the district of Quebec. King had had no difficulty in agreeing to four French Canadians - this was the number that he and Lapointe had settled upon at the beginning - but he had held out for a total Quebec representation of five and he had given



no encouragement to the supporters of Walter Mitchell. He had also yielded to Gouin's request for a portfolio, but he had been much dismayed to learn that, in effect, the only portfolios in which Gouin was interested were Justice and President of the Privy Council. Justice had already been promised to Lapointe and, with respect to Gouin's alternative preference, there were special and, to King, compelling objections. The Presidency of the Privy Council, traditionally a minor post, had taken on a greatly enlarged importance during the period of Union Government when it was given, first to N. W. Rowell and then to J. A. Calder, to signify the position of each in succession as titular leader of the Unionist Liberal wing of the wartime and postwar coalition. Under these auspices the portfolio had recently acquired a prestige second only to that of the Prime Minister, and in 1921 Mackenzie King, who was bent on assembling in his own hands all the symbols of ultimate political power, had deliberately reserved it for himself. Most assuredly, he had not the slightest intention of giving it to Gouin, whose loyalty he viewed with the most profound suspicion, even if, to avoid doing so, it became necessary to back down on his promise of Justice to Lapointe.

In the early stages of cabinet formation Mackenzie King had been much more worried about Gouin - and even about Mitchell - than he had about the third controversial



Montrealer, Rodolphe Lemieux, whom he believed he had succeeded in sidetracking, right at the beginning, into the Speakership of the House of Commons. In this belief King was wholly mistaken, for Lemieux's pride was bruised by the primacy which had been given to Lapointe in all the consultations and by the speed with which King had grasped at his expressed interest in the Speakership, and in the week that followed their first interview Lemieux spread the word in sympathetic circles that he was being ignored. In this way he succeeded in stirring up a lobby in his behalf, and by the beginning of the second week of cabinet-making its activities were giving Ernest Lapointe serious concern. On Tuesday, December 20, Lapointe confided his worries to Mackenzie King and two days later he took Beland with him to King's office for a discussion of the problems of Quebec representation.

At this meeting, on Thursday afternoon, the two Quebecers urged King to raise their province's quota of ministers to six and to restrict the English-speaking share of it to one. The proposal had two implications: it would deprive Montreal of more than one English-speaking representative; and, by providing for five French Canadians, it would make room not only for the troublesome Lemieux but also for Lapointe's old friend and mentor, Jacques Bureau, thereby achieving an even balance between the district of Quebec (Lapointe, Beland and Bureau) and the district of Montreal





(Gouin, Lemieux and an English representative). Mackenzie King had no reason to want more than one English minister from Quebec (this was what he had been thinking of all along and, besides, it was the easiest way to avoid taking in Mitchell), but he balked at the proposed enlargement of the Quebec quota. King's original design contemplated five for Ontario (four plus the Prime Minister) five for Quebec (four plus the Solicitor General) and one for each of the other provinces, and he was reluctant to depart from these figures. He therefore resisted Lapointe and Beland on this point, as he had the Montrealers in the previous week, and countered their proposal with a little pressure of his own. He began, in fact, to urge Lapointe to take the portfolio of Marine and Fisheries, arguing the Justice would bury him in legal work and isolate him from the main currents of political life in French Canada. King's real purpose, of course, was to recover Justice for Gouin, and Lapointe was naturally reluctant to release the more important portfolio to his rival. He gave King no undertaking at this interview but within a few hours King's insistence mounted as the result of a message from Montreal. That evening Senator Dandurand telephoned to urge him to take in Lemieux as the man most capable of maintaining a close liaison between the government and the district of Montreal; and in the same conversation Dandurand made it plain that Gouin was still anxious to be appointed



President of the Privy Council. Dandurand and Gouin were coming to Ottawa the next day, Friday, and it was arranged that they should see King that evening.

Mackenzie King made careful preparation for this encounter. On Friday morning he saw Lapointe again, repeated his request of the previous day, and succeeded at length in persuading him to give up Justice to Gouin. Lapointe was not happy at making the sacrifice and he intimated that Bureau would be upset, but he said finally that they would do anything to help the party and get a government formed. King now had something substantial with which to turn aside any further pressure from Montreal on other aspects of cabinet formation and, thus fortified, he turned to the question of Quebec's English-speaking representation in which the Gouin and Lapointe groups were both keenly interested.

On Friday afternoon King had interviews with Walter Mitchell and Andrew McMaster. The two men presented an interesting contrast. Mitchell was all for two English and three French from Quebec and he left no doubt that he expected to be one of the former. McMaster accepted readily the restriction of English representation to one, urged King to be as generous as he could to French Canada, and showed a willingness to stand aside for the present. Mitchell strove at length to disabuse King of any idea that Gouin had been a party to a conspiracy against him, and he also managed to convey a message from Premier Taschereau and his



colleagues in the Quebec government to the effect that they were decidedly unsympathetic to the current negotiations with the Progressives. McMaster was emphatically in favour of these negotiations. The only point at which the views of Mitchell and McMaster coincided was the acknowledgement by each in turn, at King's prompting, that his claims to a cabinet post were inferior to those of James A. Robb. The admission was all that King needed; the appointment of Robb as the sole English minister from Quebec would enable him to meet the wishes of Lapointe and Beland and, at the same time, withstand any additional exertions on behalf of Walter Mitchell.

A few hours later Mackenzie King dined with Sir Lomer Gouin and Senator Dandurand and spent the evening in their company. It was a long and strenuous session, the climax of all the efforts of the Montrealers to influence the composition of the Ministry. The entire discussion was taken up with the representation of the province of Quebec. King took the initiative by stating that, thanks to Lapointe's generosity, he was now able to offer Gouin the Department of Justice. The Presidency of the Privy Council, constituted as a portfolio separate from the Prime Minister, he regarded as a wartime device and a symbol of the betrayal of Laurier by the Unionist Liberals, and he proposed to reunite the two posts in his own prime ministership. And besides, King went on, he wanted to preside at cabinet himself and he did not see how government





business could be properly conducted under two heads. Faced with this opening rebuff, Gouin quickly produced a counter-proposal. If this was the case, he would prefer to go in as a minister without portfolio, but in that event Rodolphe Lemieux would have to be taken in as Minister of Marine and Fisheries (Beland could be made House Speaker) and Walter Mitchell also appointed as a minister without portfolio. Mitchell, he emphasized, was essential. The insertion of Lemieux and Mitchell, together with himself in a minor post - this was to be Gouin's price for leaving the Privy Council portfolio to King and Justice to Lapointe. It was a skilful and, in some ways, a tempting manoeuvre, but Mackenzie King, with the remains of his Liberal-Progressive negotiations hanging in the balance and with T. A. Crerar scheduled to arrive the following morning, was not to be drawn. It was impossible, King said, to take in all three; everyone would say that the government was being run by Montreal. To this argument, which spelled certain exclusion for one of his associates, Gouin objected vigorously - what could King possibly have against them? King insisted, however, that the full trio was out of the question and that, for the province as a whole, four French and one English were all that he could manage. Senator Dandurand, seeing that the flanking movement in favour of the Montreal combination had failed, came back to the subject of Gouin's portfolio and began to press King to make him President



of the Privy Council; he kept this up until King had to say flatly that he would not do it. Whereupon Dandurand, turning to Gouin, asked what he would do if Lemieux did not come in. Gouin replied that in that case he, too, would remain out. King's double negative was thus matched by Gouin, and the bargaining had produced stalemate. In the end it was King who gave way, and on the point of Lemieux. He had prevailed upon Lapointe to make the sacrifice for Gouin and he was not going to shift again on the Justice portfolio, but he promised to see Lemieux in the morning and to do what they had asked for him.

There the discussion ended. King had yielded up Justice to Gouin and had agreed to take in Lemieux, but Gouin might not accept if Lemieux refused to come in, and Lemieux's response could not be predicted. Still, from Mackenzie King's standpoint, it had not been a complete surrender. The Montrealers had been stopped short of their full objective. They had failed to make any headway for Mitchell or to obtain for Gouin the portfolio he most desired; and, aside from Lemieux, whose final position was by no means settled, King had escaped without having to make any alterations in the Quebec representation which might frighten the Progressives. King, putting the best face on it that he could, promptly reported to Lapointe that he had stood his ground "against handing over Canada's future to the financial magnates of Montreal".<sup>43</sup>

43. Dawson, op. cit., p. 369.



After Gouin and Dandurand had departed, King saw Lapointe who was now to be called upon, so it appeared, for a second sacrifice, this time in favour of Lemieux, and gave him an account of the day's activities.<sup>44</sup> Shortly before midnight Andrew Haydon and A. B. Hudson were brought in for a final conference preparatory to the crucial meeting with Crerar on the following day. King urged Hudson to do all he could to persuade Crerar not to renew the bargaining on terms but to come in on the basis of the cabinet personnel as proposed. Hudson's terse summary captures the mood of that day in Ottawa: "Conference King, Lapointe Haydon & Hudson, Montreal pressure great. Situation tense."<sup>45</sup>

#### IX Crerar's Decision: Failure of the Negotiations with the Progressives

Saturday, December 24, was a day of dénouement in the formation of the 1921 cabinet. The two leaders of the Liberal and Progressive parties were to meet for the first time since the election and on the outcome of that interview hung the fate of Mackenzie King's first plans for the formation of his government and the rebuilding of his party. King rose early, still hopeful that before Christmas Day the new government would be sworn in and that it would include representatives of the farmers movement.

For Mackenzie King the business of the day began

44. The evidence does not indicate specifically whether King told Lapointe that he had agreed to take Lemieux in as Minister of Marine and Fisheries.

45. A. B. Hudson Papers, Hudson memorandum.





awkwardly but usefully. After breakfast he called in Rodolphe Lemieux and offered him his old portfolio of Marine and Fisheries, adding that Sir Lomer Gouin had made his own entrance into the government conditional upon Lemieux's acceptance. It was a grudging and long-delayed gesture, so tactlessly proffered as to invite the inference that King was hoping for a refusal. If such was his purpose, it was quickly achieved. Lemieux dismissed the offer - all he wanted was the Commons Speakership and that was final - and went on to give full vent to his disappointment and humiliation. He had been loyal to King - a better friend than King knew - but the conscriptionist Liberals had been out to destroy him, and King had passed him over etc., etc. What rankled most, it appeared, was the fact that he had not been summoned to Ottawa first of all, before Lapointe or anyone else, and that it was to be, at least in Lemieux's eyes, a King-Lapointe ministry. Before he was through, Rodolphe Lemieux had given Mackenzie King a difficult hour, but the embarrassment, King felt, was a small price to be rid of a man whose judgment he thought appalling and whom he regarded as the prime instigator of the "Gouin conspiracy" of the previous summer. And, besides, the absence of Lemieux's name from the final slate would make it that much easier to deal with Crerar.

Crerar arrived shortly before 10:30. King talked with him alone for a few minutes and then they were joined by Ernest Lapointe and A. B. Hudson who remained until the



discussion broke off at noon. King began by dwelling on the opportunity that was before them to strengthen the unity of Canada and to lay the foundation for the advancement of liberal policies for a long time to come. To achieve these ends and, in particular, to prevent the isolation of western Canada from the government, he was willing to take into the cabinet Crerar and other representatives of the Progressive party. He was willing, that is, if they were prepared to come in on the same footing as other ministers; he would not entertain a coalition, nor would he discuss terms beyond a general understanding on policy. This, then, was the invitation: an offer of cabinet posts in a Liberal party government so constituted, if the Winnipeg negotiations were an accurate forecast, as to be broadly sympathetic to the farming community.

The invitation was declined. Crerar replied that he would like to accept, that when he left the west he had felt free to do so if he were satisfied with the general policy of the government, but that a stopover in Toronto, on the



preceding evening, had changed his mind.<sup>46</sup> In Toronto he had met with the Progressive members from Ontario and had found them to be opposed, emphatically and unanimously, to the entrance of any Progressive into the government. He had concluded, therefore, that he could not go in, at least, not for the present. He did not intend, however, and neither did his associates, to become the official Opposition in the House of Commons; they would maintain their identity as a party, in keeping with the Saskatoon resolution, but they would give the government independent support so long as its legislation was progressive. This concession fell far short of King's hopes, and he remonstrated with Crerar on the main issue, emphasizing that western Canada stood to lose by not having as strong a representation in the cabinet as it would if Crerar and other Progressives came in. Crerar conceded the point but came back to the attitude of the Progressive members. He repeated that he "did not think it was possible at the present time to carry their support--

46. There is no doubt that Crerar, when he left the west, still felt free to enter the government if certain conditions were met. A few hours before he left Winnipeg one of his confidants in the city wired Hudson in Ottawa: "Crerar leaves this evening Toronto Ottawa Saturday. Present attitude towards joining subject condition and opinion yourself and Drury. We think conditions should be written and include Crerar caucus with Progressives". (A. B. Hudson Papers, H. J. Symington to Hudson, 21 December 1921). Two days later, while Crerar was still en route to Ottawa, J. W. Dafoe wrote to a western friend: "If Mr. King and Mr. Crerar don't come together it will be K's fault for Crerar who is a trustful soul is prepared to sign up if given any kind of a half square deal." (J. W. Dafoe Papers, Dafoe to W. A. Buchanan, 23 December 1921.)





that after a time when new members had been working together, became (sic) better acquainted and gained confidence in sincerity of government it might be possible to do something".<sup>47</sup>

Mackenzie King, seeing his whole project in imminent danger of foundering on the suspicions of the Progressive rank and file, tried a different tack and brought up the pro-agrarian complexion of the ministry, the line which he had believed all along to be his safest approach to the Progressive leaders. Would it help, he asked, if they went over the names of the ministers? Crerar hesitated, but then agreed, and King read aloud his slate, prefacing it with the remark that even at this date, it was still tentative. It was not, of course, the identical list that Haydon had shown to Crerar and Hudson in Winnipeg two weeks before; much had happened at Ottawa in the interval.<sup>48</sup> Of the original seventeen, twelve remained, including Mackenzie King and Crerar. Five had been dropped: Sir Arthur Currie and Duncan Marshall; Drury at his own request; McMaster, now replaced by Robb;

47. A. B. Hudson Papers, Hudson Memorandum. The same memorandum reports Crerar as saying, early in this interview: "Crerar said that progressives quite determined to maintain their party intact. Decisions reached during [sic: due to] resentments and animosities during elections".

48. A. B. Hudson copied out the list of names that King read on the 24th. Excluding Mackenzie King and Crerar it was as follows: Fielding, D. D. McKenzie, Sinclair (without portfolio), Copp, Lapointe, Bureau, Lemieux (Speaker), Gouin, Beland, Robb, (J. H.) King, Kennedy, Murphy, Graham, Murdock and Motherwell. (A. B. Hudson Papers, Hudson Memorandum.)



and Bostock, replaced by J. H. King. Crerar made no criticism of these changes. He did object, however, to three new names, McKenzie, Graham and Lemieux, and to one old one, Gouin, and he did not like to see two places assigned to Nova Scotia. McKenzie and Graham had been added as a result of insistent demands from Nova Scotia and Ontario. King explained that McKenzie's tenure would not be long, and he said that Graham was willing to come in or stay out. As for Lemieux, he was to be Speaker, not a minister; it was necessary to include either Gouin or Lemieux, but, King said, he would not take both and, most decidedly, he would not take Mitchell for whom the other two were pressing.

Neither King's slate nor his explanations made any difference. Crerar's mind was made up and he was no longer interested in bargaining over policy or about the number of Progressives who should be given cabinet posts. He only wanted to know whether King would alter the policy of his government if there were no Progressives in it. King said that he would not, but that in their absence it might be more difficult to go as far to meet them as he would like; if the Progressives turned down his invitation, the government would have to be constructed out of the materials at hand. Once the discussion reached this stage there was really nothing left to be said. Crerar asked for a little time to confer with the three Progressive members whom he had brought down from the west, but, when he returned in mid-afternoon, it was only to confirm the answer he had given in the morning. Crerar, like Drury, had definitely





decided to remain out. After Crerar had finally departed, King, to save something from the wreckage, made a last effort to draw in A. B. Hudson, but Hudson put him off, saying that he would have to consult friends in Winnipeg. This slender hope aside, it was plain enough by Christmas eve that Mackenzie King's cabinet negotiations with the farmer leaders had ended in complete failure.

In retrospect, King and Crerar were each privately inclined to blame the other. King thought that Crerar should have inspired and dominated his following, and Crerar was critical of King for changing his slate.<sup>49</sup> These criticisms, though understandable, are not very useful as an explanation of what went wrong. Neither man, in fact, fully understood the position or the problems of the other; each did things which embarrassed the other and hampered the negotiations; and, most damaging of all, both of them operated from positions of fundamental weakness.

Mackenzie King, by his refusal to concede specific terms and written guarantees and by his rejection of a coalition, made it evident that his real purpose was absorption of the farmers' movement. This inevitably intensified the suspicions of the Progressive leaders and their allies, and made it more difficult and more dangerous for them to accept King's invitation. But King, had he

49. J. W. Dafoe Papers, Sir Clifford Sifton to Dafoe, 30 December 1921.





agreed to their terms, could not have carried the support of Quebec and Ontario Liberals who comprised almost three quarters of the new government's supporters in the House of Commons and thus formed the overwhelmingly dominant element of the fragmented Liberal party.

T. A. Crerar naturally was anxious to make very sure of substantial backing from his own people before joining a government formed by men whom they had been fighting against; but the prolonged bargaining and consultation to which this necessity gave rise exposed King to pressures which he was too weak to resist and to which he yielded in a manner which made his original offer one of diminishing attractiveness. When it was finally brought home to Crerar that he could not get the needed backing, he chose isolation from the government as the only alternative to isolation from the farmers' movement. "There is no doubt in my mind," J. W. Dafoe wrote shortly after the final collapse of the negotiations, "that under no circumstances could Crerar have taken the whole strength of the Progressive movement with him if he had gone into the Government, even though he had his due proportion of colleagues and there had been provision made for preserving the identity of the Progressives. Correspondence which I am in receipt of from farmers out in the country makes it clear to me that they regarded the whole movement as one of those old-fashioned manoeuvres by which they were to be buncoed in the interest of the



big corporations."<sup>50</sup> By the time that he reached Ottawa there was not much doubt in Crerar's mind either. The Toronto meeting, in particular, had demonstrated to him that it was too much to expect the Progressive rank and file, after a bitterly contended election campaign, and at their moment of greatest triumph as an independent political movement, to accept any new arrangements which implied, even remotely, absorption by one of the old-line political parties.

The timing of Mackenzie King's strategy was thus fundamentally wrong. A Liberal-Progressive alignment within a federal administration could only have been brought off by sophisticated, accomplished leadership on the part of men who were effectively in command of their respective followings. In 1921 neither Mackenzie King nor T. A. Crerar possessed anything like the necessary experience or authority.

Mackenzie King, though disappointed, quickly convinced himself that he had been wise to make the approach. It was a move in the right direction, he had shown that he was willing to give the Progressives a share of power within a national party, and he felt that a basis had been laid for a rapprochement which, given time, might produce a willingness to accept power on his terms, especially if, as he expected, the organized farmers failed to sustain their passion or preserve their unity in the years ahead. In that case there would be other and better opportunities, and for these King was prepared to wait.

50. J. W. Dafoe Papers, Dafoe to Sir Clifford Sifton, 31 December 1921.



X The Final Phase: Completion of the Slate

After Crerar's final refusal there was nothing for Mackenzie King to do but fill his cabinet with expectant Liberals.

In the end it took a further, and wholly anti-climactic, period of five days before the government was sworn in. The representation of three large areas remained unsettled: the Prairies, Quebec and Ontario.

The West was now only too easy. Leaving Manitoba open for Hudson (after Hudson's subsequent refusal it stood open for another two years), King turned to W. R. Motherwell of Saskatchewan and secured his enthusiastic acceptance of the Department of Agriculture. For Alberta he selected Charles Stewart, gave him Interior, and found a seat for him in the Province of Quebec. To Dr. J. H. King he assigned the moderately important portfolio of Public Works, partly as a device to soothe the Premier of British Columbia for the loss of one of his few competent ministers, and partly as a means of keeping it out of the hands of Charles Murphy.

The Province of Quebec continued, right up to the end, to present difficulty. Mackenzie King had long since decided upon Lapointe and Beland, and, in the revised list which he had shown to Crerar, he had included Bureau and Robb. There was, however, the vexing problem of Montreal representation, unresolved by the choice of Robb, and magnified by Gouin's failure to get the portfolio he wanted and by his threat to remain outside unless Lemieux went in. With Lemieux's final refusal there was no longer any assurance of holding Gouin.







It all came back to Sir Lomer Gouin and the Montreal group, and in the final week of cabinet formation their aspirations produced one last spasm of pressure.

Early in the afternoon of Saturday, December 24, while Mackenzie King sat waiting for Crerar to bring back his final answer, he called in Gouin, told him of his conclusive interview with Lemieux earlier in the day, and pressed him to accept the Justice portfolio. The news of Lemieux's decision--if news it was--did not prompt Gouin to carry out his threat, but neither was he ready, as yet, to accept King's offer. For that he still had a price, and he was determined that King should pay it. The price was the appointment of Walter Mitchell.

Mackenzie King, in his interview with Gouin and Dandurand on the preceding day, had refused to take into the cabinet the combination of Gouin, Lemieux and Mitchell. He had been driven, however, to accept Lemieux, along with Gouin, and now, with Lemieux definitely out, Gouin endeavoured to insert Mitchell as a substitute. If he were to take Justice, Gouin told King, he would need the help of some lawyer from one of the common-law provinces in the House of Commons (presumably as Solicitor General) and, in addition, it would be necessary to include Mitchell as one of the ministers from Montreal. What was he to say, after all, to Mitchell's friends who had been counting on his appointment? King's answer was blunt enough: he would simply have to tell them that Mitchell's claims ranked below Robb's, that the cabinet membership was limited, and that nothing could be done for him, at least not for the present. Gouin



was not satisfied. He would have to talk matters over again with friends in Montreal. He undertook to let King know the result on the following evening. Gouin telephoned from Montreal, as promised, on Sunday night, but only to apply more pressure, and afterwards he kept King waiting for yet another day before finally committing himself.

The stubbornness of Sir Lomer Gouin was not, in this instance, solely a personal matter. Walter Mitchell was, in truth, no ordinary office-seeker, either in ability or in the range of his connections, and included among the latter were the Bank of Montreal and the Royal Bank of Canada. The Bank of Montreal had been striving very hard to promote him for a cabinet appointment, acting through the fitting instrumentality of one of their directors, Sir Lomer Gouin. When word reached Montreal on Christmas week-end that, despite Gouin's efforts, J. A. Robb was likely to be the solitary English-speaking minister from the province, the financial community took alarm. It was decided that a last-minute effort should be made to repair the omission, and for this purpose an approach was made to P. C. Larkin of Toronto, a prominent merchant and philanthropist who was also a close personal and political friend of Mackenzie King (King's meeting with Drury on December 14 had taken place in Larkin's home). On Sunday morning the managing director of the Royal Bank telephoned Larkin from Montreal, put to him the case for two English-speaking Quebec ministers, including Mitchell, and requested him to communicate with King immediately. Larkin passed on the message forthwith, but it had no greater





success than any of the previous representations on Mitchell's behalf.<sup>51</sup>

When Gouin telephoned from Montreal on Sunday evening to suggest E. M. Macdonald of Nova Scotia for Solicitor General and to raise Mitchell's name once again, he found Mackenzie King's attitude quite unchanged. King consented to review the respective claims of Macdonald and D. D. McKenzie for the Solicitor Generalship, but on the point of Mitchell he refused to reconsider. (The sole and quite unintended effect of this latest intervention from Montreal, so it appears, was to cause King to decide not only to make McKenzie Solicitor General but to raise this position to cabinet rank, and on Monday he secured the reluctant assent of W. S. Fielding to this arrangement as fulfilment of the greatly desired allotment of two portfolios to Nova Scotia).<sup>52</sup> With that the political force of Montreal business was spent and, although Gouin held off his own decision for another twenty-four hours, he informed King on Monday night, December 26, that he would accept appointment as Minister of Justice. King, greatly relieved, proceeded to complete the arrangements for Quebec.

Lapointe and his two colleagues, Beland and Bureau, made

51. Mackenzie King Papers, P. C. Larkin to King, 29 December 1921, enclosing copies of Larkin to E. L. Pease, 27 December 1921, E. L. Pease to Larkin 28 December 1921, and Larkin to E. L. Pease, 29 December, 1921.

52. Mackenzie King Papers, W. S. Fielding to King, 26 December, 1929.





up the representation for the Quebec district. For Montreal there were Gouin and Robb, and, to maintain an even balance between the two districts, Senator Dandurand was added as government leader in the Senate. With respect to numbers and racial composition, the Quebec roster came out, as Ernest Lapointe had lately urged, at five French and one English, for a total of six, making one more than Mackenzie King had initially contemplated. In the matter of portfolios the balance inclined in favour of Montreal. Gouin had gained the senior department, among those allotted the province, and Lapointe had accepted one of distinctly lesser importance in Marine and Fisheries. Bureau received Customs and Excise, and King persuaded Beland to take Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment, a department for which he felt that Dr. Beland's professional background and experience as a prisoner of war would make him an appropriate minister. Montreal was afforded compensation for its disappointment in the English-speaking representation of the province by the assignment of Trade and Commerce, a department of importance to the business community, to J. A. Robb. No portfolio was bestowed on Senator Dandurand, the third Montrealer.

No last-minute obstacles--or opportunities--appeared in Ontario. Mackenzie King, having failed to secure Drury, at length persuaded W. C. Kennedy to take on the controversial Department of Railways and Canals. He wanted to keep this portfolio in Ontario, and Kennedy was the only Ontario Liberal to whom he was prepared to entrust it. James Murdock, whom King was bent on having as a representative of labour, was



given the Labour Department, and arrangements were set in motion to provide him with a seat in the House of Commons. The two veteran warhorses, George Graham and Charles Murphy, were grudgingly admitted, faute de mieux, and because King was brought to the conclusion that there were more enemies to be made by leaving them outside, but his treatment of their portfolios suggests the measure of his reluctance. Murphy, who had asked expressly for Railways or Public Works, was denied both and offered, instead, his choice of two or three lesser departments; of these he selected the Post Office. This left Militia and Defence alone unprovided for and, there being no one more suitable among the Liberals in the Commons, King eventually offered it, with the Naval Service appended, to Graham. It was not what Graham wanted--he would have preferred his old portfolio of Railways, or Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment,--but he took what he was given. Finally, as the sixth minister for Ontario, and only because of King's feeling that Ontario should not have fewer places than Quebec, T. A. Low was added as a minister without portfolio.

The roster then being as complete as it could be made, "having regard to all the circumstances", as the new Prime Minister was accustomed to say, the Mackenzie King administration was sworn in by the Governor General on the afternoon of Thursday, the 29th of December.



The members were as follows:

W. L. Mackenzie King:	Prime Minister, Secretary of State for External Affairs, President of the Privy Council.
W. S. Fielding:	Finance and Receiver General.
George P. Graham:	Militia and Defence, and Naval Service
Charles Murphy:	Post Office
Raoul Dandurand:	Minister without Portfolio
H. S. Beland:	Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment and Health
Sir Lomer Gouin:	Justice and Attorney General
Jacques Bureau:	Customs and Excise
Ernest Lapointe:	Marine and Fisheries
D. D. McKenzie:	Solicitor General
J. A. Robb:	Trade and Commerce
T. A. Low:	Minister without Portfolio
A. B. Copp:	Secretary of State
W. C. Kennedy:	Railways and Canals
Charles Stewart:	Interior, Indian Affairs, and Mines
W. R. Motherwell:	Agriculture
James Murdock:	Labour
J. E. Sinclair:	Minister without Portfolio
James H. King:	Public Works <sup>53</sup>

## XI Conclusions

(1) Well before the period of cabinet formation in December 1921 Ernest Lapointe was singled out by Mackenzie King to be his principal lieutenant in the leadership of the Liberal party with a special influence over the making of the cabinet as a whole. Between the Liberal Convention of 1919 and the general election two and a half years later, King took Lapointe with him on every important speaking tour that he made. He offered Lapointe, three months before the election, any portfolio that he wanted in the next government, and promised to work out all

53. Dr. J. H. King was not sworn in until 3rd February, 1922. Senator Hewitt Bostock served as Minister of Public Works, as a stop-gap measure, from 29th December, 1921 to 3rd February, 1922; on the latter date he became Speaker of the Senate and the Public Works portfolio reverted to Dr. King in the Commons.







the cabinet arrangements with him. Once the election was over he called Lapointe to Ottawa, summoning him before any other member of the parliamentary group, and in their first discussion reaffirmed his earlier assurances. He told Lapointe that he regarded him as the real leader in the Province on Quebec and as his closest colleague, invited him to choose his own portfolio, and said that he would give him his full confidence and that they would work out everything together. In the three weeks of cabinet-making that followed, King saw Lapointe more frequently than any other prospective minister, and made greater use of his advice and assistance in the two most difficult problems that confronted him, the composition of the Quebec representation and the negotiations with the Progressives.

Yet the role to which Ernest Lapointe was called and the position which he was able to make for himself was not, in 1921 or subsequently, that of a co-Prime Minister. The Liberal Convention of 1919 had elected a single national leader for the Liberal party, and Canadian constitutional practice, since 1867, recognized only one Prime Minister. Mackenzie King, though he was not yet by any means securely established in either of these posts of ultimate power, was fully determined to be the single pre-eminent head of his party and his government, and the patent weaknesses of his position in 1921 only made him the more sensitive about any suggestions that final authority be shared with anyone else. His earlier proposals of a coalition with the Progressives were quickly



discarded, even before the election, when it began to appear that there would be many more Liberals than Progressives in the new Parliament, and it is perfectly evident that King had not the least intention of raising any Liberal colleague to a position in the cabinet co-ordinate with himself.

In the making of the 1921 cabinet Mackenzie King took several important decisions in advance of his discussions with Lapointe and other prospective ministers. Three months before the election he had invited Kennedy and Murdock into the government. Immediately after the election, in his preliminary conversations with Andrew Haydon, he decided that the cabinet should be smaller than the Meighen cabinet. And on the ambitious plan to bring the Progressive leaders into the government, the decision to open negotiations was taken by King before Lapointe arrived in Ottawa. Lapointe subsequently endorsed these decisions.

Lapointe was consulted on the full range of cabinet appointments for all the provinces, and he produced a comprehensive slate of his own. His recommendations were given great weight, for example, in the cases of Copp, Murphy and McKenzie, but he did not have a veto over the choice of ministers from any province. Though no one was appointed from Quebec of whom Lapointe did not approve, it can scarcely be maintained that he had the final say about the representation of the District of Montreal.

With respect to the portfolio assignments Lapointe's influence was not decisive. He was consulted, as were others,



but the final decisions were King's. King negotiated directly with each minister, and, of all the interviews that King had, Lapointe was present only at those with Crerar and Hudson. Lapointe, indeed, did not finally receive the portfolio of his choice. He asked for, and was promised, Justice, but at a later stage in the negotiations the offer was rescinded, Justice was given to his principal French-Canadian rival, and Lapointe was left with a portfolio of distinctly lesser prestige.

The truth is that Ernest Lapointe was not, in 1921, the sole or paramount leader of the Liberal party in Quebec, much less the undisputed chef of French Canada. Sir Wilfrid Laurier's death had removed the one figure who was able to command the loyalties of the French-Canadian community as a whole. In his absence the old regional tensions revived, and the Quebec Liberals divided into two contending factions, each with its own leader and both equally successful in the first postwar general election. Ernest Lapointe was the acknowledged leader in the district of Quebec, but his authority in the district of Montreal was negligible. The Montreal Liberals, French and English, had brought forward a new federal leader in the person of Sir Lomer Gouin, and during the cabinet formation of 1921 their energies--and his--were devoted to elevating him to the position of senior minister for the province and to furnishing him with as many cabinet colleagues from Montreal as they possibly could.

In the ensuing struggle between the two Quebec factions







Lapointe was only partially successful. He was able, in the end, to obtain the appointment of three ministers, himself included, from the district of Quebec, and to hold Montreal to three, one of the latter being an English Canadian. But in the contest for the senior Quebec portfolio Lapointe lost out to Gouin, and the district of Montreal also received, in the Department of Trade and Commerce, a second important portfolio. Gouin's victory was signalized at the first meeting of the new cabinet when he was assigned the chair immediately to the left of the Prime Minister. W. S. Fielding, the Minister of Finance and the senior Privy Councillor, was seated on Mackenzie King's right, and Ernest Lapointe to the right of Fielding.

Yet the setback to Ernest Lapointe was only temporary, and his subordination to Sir Lomer Gouin more formal than real. The insistent, crowding pressure to which Mackenzie King was subjected by the Montrealers in the making of his cabinet did nothing at all to allay his distrust of Gouin, and in the councils of the new government it was Lapointe, above all, to whom King turned for advice on all matters affecting Quebec. The Prime Minister's evident preference, coupled with Gouin's progressive alienation of the Quebec Liberal members by his arrogance, effectively prevented Gouin from consolidating his position, and, when he retired two years later, a somewhat frustrated and diminished figure, Lapointe was promoted to the Justice portfolio and quickly came into his own. He held the post in every Liberal administration until his death in 1941, and throughout that period he was the pre-eminent French-Canadian Liberal,



the second man in the hierarchy of his party.

(2) To return to cabinet-making in 1921, Lapointe was not the only French Canadian whose advice Mackenzie King sought or received. King consulted most of the other leading Quebec Liberals in federal politics, including Gouin and Lemieux, Beland and Dandurand. They were consulted not only about Quebec representation, English-speaking as well as French-speaking, and about the representation of French ministers outside Quebec, but also on the wider problems of cabinet formation, including the representation of the other provinces and the entrance of the Progressive leaders into the government.

Without exception they showed no interest in the representation of French-speaking people outside of Quebec. Otherwise, however, they were far from indifferent to the representation of the English-speaking provinces. They were opposed to a Liberal-Progressive coalition but not to the idea of inviting individual Progressive leaders and adherents into the government, though they differed, in detail, as to who should be brought in. Nevertheless, though they clearly endeavoured to influence Mackenzie King's choice of ministers from the other provinces, their principal and overriding concern lay with the representation which the Province of Quebec was to receive. And on every aspect of this problem--the number of French and the number of English, the regional distribution of cabinet places, the assignment of the senior portfolio--there was a sharp clash of opinion between the district of Montreal and the district of Quebec.



(3) Partly because of this pervasive regional rivalry, French-Canadian leaders in 1921 showed a greater than usual concern over the portfolio assignments for French-Canadian ministers. On this subject five of the French Canadians who offered advice to Mackenzie King had specific recommendations to make. Lapointe thought that French Canadians should get Justice, Secretary of State and Public Works; Gouin claimed for them the Presidency of the Privy Council, Justice, and Marine and Fisheries; Lemieux proposed that Justice or Railways should go to Gouin; Dandurand proposed Gouin's name for Justice or the Privy Council post; and Beland suggested himself as Postmaster General. Three of these portfolios, Marine and Fisheries, Postmaster General and Solicitor General, were offices in which French Canadians had appeared prominently during the Laurier administration. They had been intermittently represented in two others, Secretary of State and the Presidency of the Privy Council, most recently in the Meighen Government. The only two departures from recent practice were the request for the Justice portfolio, which had not been held by a French Canadian since the Mackenzie administration, and Lemieux's suggestion of Railways for Gouin. No French Canadian had ever occupied Railways, and Lemieux was the only man, in 1921, to propose a French Canadian for this or any other major economic department.

Not all of these proposals were accepted, and three of the four French-Canadian ministers who were assigned portfolios were disappointed, in varying degrees, with what they received.







Gouin was made Minister of Justice because he had to be given an important portfolio and because Mackenzie King was afraid to let him have the Presidency of the Privy Council. Lapointe was then relegated to Marine and Fisheries. Beland's first preference was for the Post Office, his old department in the last days of the Laurier Government, but, when Charles Murphy selected it from the several lesser portfolios which he was offered, Beland accepted Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment and Health. Bureau, so far as can be determined, had no particular preference, and he was given Customs and Excise.

Four portfolios were thus distributed among the five French-Canadian ministers: Justice, Marine and Fisheries, Customs and Excise, and Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment and Health. Justice was a senior and important portfolio, highly esteemed in the legal profession and in all the interlocking professional and commercial circles which formed the traditional political elite of French Canada. Lapointe told King quite frankly that it would give him the prestige he needed in the Province of Quebec, and Gouin was evidently of the opinion that either Justice or the Privy Council would be an appropriate recognition of the prestige which he already possessed. Marine and Fisheries was a moderately important department, and its Marine Division, invested with responsibility for the protection and improvement of navigation in the St. Lawrence, was of special interest to Quebec. Customs and Excise, charged with the enforcement of the tariff laws and the collection of internal revenue, was the principal revenue-producing department of the federal government.



Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment and Health was a combination of two new and small departments: the former was of immediate concern to a large group of war veterans; and the Health Department afforded a nucleus for the development of programmes of social welfare of the kind which were embodied in the 1919 Liberal platform. Customs and Excise was connected, though not so closely as Finance or Trade and Commerce, with the economic policies of the new government; and the administration of this department became, four years later, a storm-centre of political controversy, though this, of course, was not foreseen in 1921. Justice was the only department of the four which conferred upon its minister substantial influence in the government or high prestige in the country.

There were no hard and fast rules which automatically opened or shut the door of any department to an English-speaking minister or a French-speaking minister. Nevertheless, Mackenzie King and the other Liberal leaders were undoubtedly influenced by the relevance of certain portfolios to particular regional and other group interests and by the practices which had developed in the past with respect to the allocation of these portfolios. The Department of the Interior, since 1888, had been held consistently by western ministers, and the spectacular growth of the Prairie Provinces in the twentieth century led easily to the assumption that Agriculture, as well, should go to the West. Fielding's long tenure of the Finance Department and his continuing strength in the Liberal party made it virtually unthinkable that it should be given to anyone else so long as





he was capable of supporting the weight of its departmental duties. Besides, Mackenzie King was not in sufficient command of his party to demote Fielding, even if he had desired to do so. As it was, he considered no one else for the post, and no other name was suggested to him. It might have been suspected that Sir Lomer Gouin, given his particular business connections and his strong concern with tariff and railway policy, would have aspired to Finance or Railways and Canals. There is not the slightest evidence that he did so, and, in fact he ruled himself out for both these portfolios by his over-riding determination to be President of the Privy Council or Minister of Justice and by his refusal to take any department with a substantial administrative load. Railways and Canals, like Finance, had always been held by English Canadians. In 1921 public ownership of railways was an exceedingly divisive issue in the Liberal party. Mackenzie King wanted, therefore, to keep the Railways portfolio out of the hands of anyone who was strongly committed to one or other side of the question. This ruled out all the leading Westerners and Quebecers, and, since the Maritime Provinces offered no suitable candidate, it had to go to Ontario. Trade and Commerce had always been assigned to an English Canadian from Ontario or Quebec; in 1921 Kennedy was the only acceptable possibility from Ontario, but King had greater need of Kennedy in Railways, and he therefore appointed Robb, the only available businessman, apart from Gouin, among the Quebec candidates. On the other hand, the Post Office, Public Works and the office of the Secretary of State were three departments in which French Canadians had





been heavily represented in the past, and in 1921 Mackenzie King assigned them all to English Canadians.

(4) Of all the political leaders who made representations to Mackenzie King during the cabinet formation of 1921, only two, T. A. Crerar and A. B. Hudson, endeavoured to attach policy conditions to their entrance into the government. The Liberal party stood committed to the programme of extensive economic and social reform which had been drawn up by the National Liberal Convention in 1919. The programme proposed sweeping and specific tariff reductions, a revival of reciprocity, improved labor practices in the terms of the Labor Conventions of the Treaty of Versailles, and measures of social welfare which included old age pensions, unemployment insurance and maternity benefits. The platform was not universally popular among Liberals: the tariff proposals, for one thing, were disliked in the central provinces, they had been publicly repudiated by Fielding, and during the 1921 election campaign, they were deliberately played down by Mackenzie King. It is scarcely surprising, therefore, that the Progressive leaders who were invited to enter the Liberal cabinet were highly sceptical of the sincerity of the Liberal leadership. Accordingly, Crerar and Hudson tried hard to obtain from Mackenzie King specific commitments on economic policies which were of prime important to the farmers. King was prevailed upon to offer concessions, but they were so modest and so general in their nature as to be unsatisfactory to the Westerners, and, of course, even these commitments fell to the ground once the Liberal-Progressive negotiations collapsed. No other politician,



whether English-speaking or French-speaking, attempted to reach an understanding with Mackenzie King or to secure commitments from him on government policy or legislation.

(5) What proportion of the 1921 cabinet was French Canadian? Were French Canadians under-represented in relation to their numerical position in the population of Canada?

The French share of the 1921 cabinet slightly exceeded one quarter: five of the nineteen members were French-speaking. The French share of the population of Canada amounted to twenty-eight per cent.<sup>54</sup>

The total population of Canada in 1921 was 8,800,000, and with a cabinet of nineteen members this meant one cabinet minister for every 463,000 head of population. The French share was slightly under this national ratio. There were nearly 2,500,000 French-speaking Canadians in the whole of Canada, and, with five French-Canadian cabinet ministers, this meant one minister for each 500,000 head of French population in Canada.

When these population figures are reduced to regional and provincial elements, the French-Canadian position in the cabinet appears to better advantage in some respects and worse in others. All five French ministers were from the Province of Quebec. With the French-speaking population of Quebec standing almost at 1,900,000, this gave one minister to every 380,000 French Canadians in Quebec. The Quebec French, moreover, did distinctly better than the Quebec English: one to 380,000 as

54. The French-Canadian share of the Liberal membership in the new House of Commons was fifty per cent: 58 out of 117.



compared with one to 472,000. On the other hand, the French-speaking minorities outside Quebec, amounting to 563,000 in all--248,000 in Ontario, 125,000 in the four western provinces, and 190,000 in the Maritimes--were given no separate representation. By comparison with the population of the Maritime Provinces, the French population of Canada was very much under-represented in the cabinet: one minister to every 500,000 French as opposed to one for every 333,000 Maritimers. As against the population of Ontario, however, the French of Canada stood on a precisely equal footing of representation, one minister to 500,000 in each case; and as against the four western provinces the French of Canada were substantially over-represented, one to 500,000 French by comparison with one to 833,000 Westerners.

There is no indication that French Canadians were dissatisfied with the number of places which they received in the 1921 cabinet. Their representation was, in fact, larger, both in absolute numbers and in relation to the size of the cabinet, than it had been in any cabinet since Confederation. The previous high point had been reached in the Laurier cabinet, as it was constituted in the years immediately preceding its defeat; the French Canadians had then been represented by four cabinet ministers and the Solicitor General in a ministry of seventeen members.<sup>55</sup> Ernest Lapointe, at the beginning of the cabinet-making in 1921, advised Mackenzie King to follow the Laurier example in this respect, and he urged that, at the very least, French-Canadian representation must

55. The Solicitor General was then a member of the ministry but not of the cabinet.







be kept as high as it had been in the Meighen government prior to the election, namely, three cabinet ministers and the Solicitor General in a ministry of twenty-three. Later in the cabinet-making proceedings, when the two districts in the province of Quebec were jockeying furiously for position, Lapointe and his colleagues from the Quebec district pressed for a total French-Canadian representation of five, thus holding the English-speaking representation of the province to one, whereas Gouin and the Montrealers contended for a French-Canadian representation of four, so as to include two representatives of the Quebec English. No English-Canadian leader outside of Quebec endeavoured to influence the number of French Canadians in the cabinet. Two English-speaking Quebecers, however, attempted to do so: Mitchell recommended that French-Canadian representation be limited to three, and McMaster suggested that it be four. None of the Quebec French showed any interest in the cabinet representation for the French ministers outside Quebec. Pius Michaud and Onesiphore Turgeon were the only men to propose that the New Brunswick minister be a French Canadian; each suggested himself, and neither received any support from the Quebecers, who had only English names to recommend for the post.



(6) Was any eligible candidate excluded from the cabinet because he looked to be too inflexible on public questions or dangerously unorthodox on matters of party policy? Most decidedly, this consideration did not apply to any of the French Canadians who were left out. Boivin was omitted because he was known to have been negotiating with Meighen about a post in the previous government and because his loyalty to the Liberal party was, on that account, suspect. Lemieux deliberately chose to remain out, it would appear, rather than go in and play second fiddle to Lapointe. Turgeon and Michaud were left out because of the impossibility of deciding between them and because neither attracted strong support from the New Brunswick English or the Quebec French.

The possession of very strong, not to say inflexible, opinions on trade and transportation issues did not keep Gouin or Dandurand out of the cabinet, nor, did the fact that the Progressive leaders were committed to quite opposite views cause their appointment to appear less desirable in the eyes of Mackenzie King. Inflexibility on economic policy was a barrier, however, to Mitchell and McMaster. The appointment of Mitchell, King felt, would tip the balance far too heavily on the side of the protectionists. Yet





Mitchell had powerful backing and, to make his exclusion less unpalatable in Montreal, King also jettisoned McMaster, his polar opposite on economic questions, in favour of the middle-of-the-roader, J. A. Robb.

Among the other English-Canadian rejects, A. K. Maclean was left out because Mackenzie King feared that the appointment of a second conscriptionist Liberal from Nova Scotia would cause trouble in the province. E. M. Macdonald, a fellow Nova Scotian, was passed over because his claims, on the score of party service, were judged to be inferior to those of D. D. McKenzie.

